TRANSNATIONAL ITALIAN CULTURES

ACCIDENTAL ORIENTALISTS

Modern Italian Travelers in Ottoman Lands

BARBARA SPACKMAN

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Barbara Spackman

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Portions of this book draw upon material that appeared in earlier form in previously published essays; it is reprinted here by permission of the publishers, as follows: "Detourism: Orienting Italy in Amalia Nizzoli's *Memorie sull'Egitto," Vie Italianist* 25 (2005): 35-54, is reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd. An earlier version of a portion of Chapter 2 appeared in "Hygiene in the Harem: The Orientalism of Cristina di Belgioioso," *MLN Italian Issue* 124:1 (2009): 158-76, and a section of Chapter 4 draws upon "Muslim in Milan: The Orientalism of Leda Rafanelli," in *Orientalistni italiani,* ed. Gabriele Proglio (Alba: Antares, 2012), 74-89. The Epilogue reproduces material from *"Italiani DOC?* Passing and Posing from Giovanni Finati to Amara Lakhous," *California Italian Studies Journal* 2:1 (2011) doi: ismrg_cisj_8973.

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Preface

This book examines a set of narratives authored by inhabitants of the Italian peninsula who, through the historical accidents of forced exile, desertion, or opportunism, traveled to Ottoman-governed lands during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and wrote about their experiences. It argues that the porous and riven national identities of these Italian travelers positioned them differently than their British and French counterparts in relation to the predominantly Muslim world in which they found themselves, and to which, in some cases, they came to belong. Mindful of the historical relation of the Italian peninsula and its population to the Mediterranean world, and, at least from the seventeenth century until 1861, of Italy as a dominated fraction of the dominant world, and hence as Europe's internal other in the modern period, the book is attentive to the ways in which the particular strand of "Accidental Italian Orientalism" that it identifies may be said to have a cultural and historical specificity of its own. Italians, after all, and especially southern Italians, were themselves subjected to an Orientalization on the part of northern Europeans, and the fact that Italian was the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean for centuries positioned its speakers in the Mediterranean world differently from northern Europeans.[1] Indeed, if Edward Said wrote little about Italian Orientalism (with the exception of side glances to Marco Polo and Dante), and the field of postcolonial studies has largely followed in his wake in this respect, it is likely in large part because the Italian case departs significantly from those of

1 To be sure, for southern Italy, this Orientalization is overdetermined by the so-called "southern question," and the Orientalization of southern Italians on the part of northern Italians during and especially after unification. See Jane Schneider, ed., *Italy's "Southern Question": Orientalism in One Country* (New York: Berg, 1998), and Nelson Moe, *The View from Vesuvius*: *Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

Britain and France, where philology, secularization, and the discipline and institutionalization of Orientalism went hand in hand in the nineteenth century. In Italy, instead, the Neapolitan institution that now goes by the name of "Oriental" (the Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale") was founded in 1732 by a missionary as the "College of Chinese," whose goal was to train young Chinese so that they might return to China and propagate Catholicism; only in 1888 was its missionary goal officially abandoned, and only in the 1920s did a secular school of Orientalism, linked with a colonial program, take shape.[2] In addition, compared with Britain and France, Italy comes late both to unification as a nation state and to the colonial enterprise; Italians who traveled to the Middle East in the nineteenth century thus did so without the backing of state power with imperial ambitions, or of cultural and scientific institutions of the sort that supported British and French travelers and those associated with them. And whereas major nineteenth-century British and French writers traveled to, imagined, and wrote about the Middle East, Italy has no Flaubert, no Gautier, no Nerval; no Lane, no Burton, no George Eliot. Italian Orientalism has, correspondingly, not been the topic of the kind of extensive scholarly analysis and debate we have seen in the British and French contexts since the 1978 publication of Said's *Orientalism*.[3] And yet, if Italy's canonical nineteenth-century novelists did

2 I draw here upon Karla Mallette's account in *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean: Toward a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 132–33 and 139–40. As her title suggests, she is primarily interested in scholars of Arabic and Islamic civilization. Fabrizio De Donno, who is interested, rather, in scholars of Sanskrit among nineteenth-century Italian academic Orientalists, writes that the establishment of a position for Gaspare Gorresio as professor of Sanskrit at Turin University in 1852 "marked the official establishment of Italian academic orientalism (although the discipline developed mostly in the post-unification period and in conjunction with positivism)." See Fabrizio De Donno, "Routes to Modernity: Orientalism and Mediterraneanism in Italian Culture, 1810–1910," *California Italian Studies* 1:1 http://escholarship.org/uc/item/920809th.

3 Even as Said's work has been debated, critiqued, extended, and excoriated for almost 40 years now, there is no question that it played a generative role in postcolonial literary and cultural studies. It also continues to provoke controversy, especially in its representation of academic Orientalists. Three recent hefty volumes have been devoted to exposing errors and to defending the scholarly tradition that was the object of Said's critique: the least temperate of these is Ibn Warraq, *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's* Orientalism (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007), which focuses predominantly on scholars, writers, artists, and facts that Said does not address; Daniel Martin Varisco aptly characterizes his 500-page critique, *Reading Orientalism: Said and*

not share the fascination of the British and French with the Middle East, preoccupied as they were with the internally imagined geographies of North and South, Italy does have a long tradition of what we would now classify as travel writing: accounts by merchants, explorers, exiles, and emigrants too numerous to count.[4] It is from this tradition that I have chosen case studies from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries that dramatize very different responses to immersion in what is portrayed as "the Muslim world," a locution to which I will return.

This is not to deny that Italian Orientalism shares much with those of England and France, nor is it to subscribe to the notion of "Italiani, brava gente" – of Italians as kinder, gentler colonialists, a notion that recent scholarship on racism, anti-Semitism, and colonialism in Italy has done much to debunk.[5] Rather, it is to recognize that, as Aamir R. Mufti has recently put

the Unsaid (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), as "satirical criticism" (xi); in *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and its Discontents* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2006), Robert Irwin sums up Said's representation of academic Orientalism as "richly imagined but essentially fictional" (309) and offers his own account of the history of the scholarly Orientalism. Although much of the information they offer is useful, all three share a vitriolic ad hominem tone that vitiates their critiques.

4 Recent studies on modern Italian travel writing within this long tradition include: Theodore Cachey, Jr., "An Italian History of Travel," *Annali d'italianistica* 14 (1996): 55–64; Loredana Polezzi, *Translating Travel: Contemporary Italian Travel Writing in Translation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001); Derek Duncan, "Travel and Autobiography: Giovanni Comisso's Memories of the War," in *Cultural Encounters: European Travel Writing in the* 1930s, ed. Charles Burdett and Derek Duncan (New York: Berghan Books, 2002), 49–63; Charles Burdett, *Journeys through Fascism: Italian Travel Writing between the Wars* (New York: Berghan Books, 2007); Nathalie Hester, *Literature and Identity in Italian Baroque Writing* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008); Federica Frediani, Ricciarda Ricorda, and Luisa Rossi, eds, *Spazi Segni Parole: Percorsi di viaggiatrici italiane* (Milan: Francoangeli, 2012). Scattered references to Italian travelers may also be found in Attilio Brilli's wide-ranging *Il viaggio in Oriente* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009). The two volumes edited by Luca Clerici, *Scrittori Italiani di viaggio 1700–1861* (Milan: Mondadori, 2008) and *Scrittori italiani di viaggio 1861–2000* (Milan: Mondadori, 2013) are a valuable resource, containing excerpts from travel narratives, including travel within the Italian peninsula, written in Italian; excluded are Italians who wrote in languages other than Italian, such as Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, Giovanni Belzoni, and Giovanni Finati. Additional sources are cited in the notes that accompany each chapter.

5 See David Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 1994), Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, brava gente: Un mito duro a morire* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005), and Simon Levis Sullam, *I carnefici italiani: Scene dal genocidio degli ebrei, 1943–1945* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2015).

it, Orientalisms in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are "multiple, but simultaneously singular and pan-European."[6] In order to keep in view this simultaneous multiplicity and singularity, "Accidental Orientalists" places the "Italian" cases it examines – narratives written in Italian, English and French – against a backdrop of comparative reference to works in English and French that preceded or were contemporary to them. It draws attention to the ways in which the encounter of a weak national identity with the fluidity and multiplicity of identities made possible in the late Ottoman world produced significantly different configurations in the Italian case. At the same time, many of the fundamental ideological functions and tropes of Orientalism remain firmly in place. Two in particular are recurrent concerns in the chapters that follow. First, the topic and possibility of conversion to Islam – sometimes abhorred, sometimes embraced – unites my four case studies and leads me to engage with versions of Islamophobia that resonate all too clearly with the feverish Islamophobia that characterizes our present historical moment. It also leads me to examine versions of Islamophilia that are nonetheless also grounded in Orientalism, even as they revise, or put to ideologically divergent uses, its stereotypes. Both the demonization that produces Islamophobia and the idealization that produces Islamophilia, in distinct yet entangled ways, characterize the Western subject's orientation toward what Orientalism posits as the Islamic East. The question of the constitution of that Western subject leads me to the second ideological function that is of interest in what follows: namely, the way in which Orientalism, with its attendant Islamophobia and Islamophilia, shaped not only those it "Orientalized" but also those it "Westernized" and "Europeanized." Indeed, I argue that it is the lability of Italian identity, and its not quite "European-ness," that brings the process of "Westernization" and "Europeanization" into higher relief, as we will see with greatest clarity in Chapter 1.

My focus on the narratives of these travelers has been inspired by the surge of interest in travel writing and its theorization in recent decades: postcolonial theory in the wake of Said's *Orientalism* and its critique drew our attention especially to the writings of French and English travelers in the nineteenth century;[7] the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's 1492

6 Aamir R. Mufti, *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 66–67.

7 A complete list would be long indeed; I include here works on Orientalism that have been of particular inspiration to me in this project: Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: British and French Orientalisms* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Ali Behdad, *Belated*

voyage sparked a flurry of studies of the early modern voyages of exploration and the aftermath of Spanish colonization in the Americas;[8] feminist scholars have highlighted the gendering of Orientalism and, through intersectional analysis, complicated the ways in which we conceptualize the workings of gender in relation to race, class, and ethnicity;[9] scholarship on contemporary migration, displacement, and transnationality has coalesced into the field of mobility studies;[10] and tourism studies has analyzed the commodification

Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994); Gerald MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580–1720* (New York: Palgrave, 2004); Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 2012;); Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan, eds, *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2013); Joseph Allen Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

8 Foundational work in the 1990s includes: Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possession: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797 (*New York: Methuen, 1992); Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *New World Encounters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Daria Perocco, *Viaggiare e raccontare: Narrazione di viaggio ed esperienze di racconto tra cinque e seicento* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'orso, 1997); Srinivas Aravamudan, *Tropicopolitans: Colonialism and Agency, 1688–1804* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

9 Obligatory stops in this vast territory, and on which I draw in this book, include: Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991); Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: A Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity, and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Madeleine Dobie, *Foreign Bodies: Gender, Language, and Culture in French Orientalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Reina Lewis and Sara Mills, eds, *Feminist Postcolonial Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Mary Roberts, *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

10 Crucial points of reference include Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Graziella Parati, *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, eds, *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Ruth

of leisure, from guidebooks and the development of the tourism industry in the nineteenth century to the current global order.[11] An overview of these overlapping yet diverse approaches would lead us far afield of the current project's focus on modern Italian travel writing, a writing practice once studied primarily for its historical or linguistic interest (and consequently writers of Italian origin who published in languages other than Italian were largely excluded) rather than with the tools we adopt for the study of imaginative literature. I think it is safe to say that the rise of postcolonial theory, the theorization of travel writing in the Anglo-American context, and the long-delayed development of the study of Italian colonialism have been game-changers in the way we can now approach texts previously deemed unworthy of our attention as scholars of literary and cultural studies.

For, as it turns out, the Italian tradition may have no Flaubert, but it does have the first European woman after Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to enter an Ottoman–Egyptian Pasha's harem and provide a description of it, Amalia Nizzoli; it has an early nineteenth-century convert to Islam, Giovanni Finati, who passed as Albanian in Muhammad Ali's Egypt, and the far better-known strongman-turned-antiquarian, Giovanni Belzoni, both of whom published travel narratives in English; it has a mid-nineteenth-century princess–patriot in political exile in Anatolia, Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, who writes in French; and it has an early twentieth-century anarchist and anti-colonialist convert to Islam whose dalliance with Mussolini has, until now, been her main claim to notoriety, Leda Rafanelli. These are not the learned Italian Orientalists who have recently begun to attract scholarly attention – for example, Michele Amari, studied by Roberto Dainotto, or Enrico Cerulli, studied by Karla Mallette.[12] Rather, they are accidental orientalists who found themselves in Egypt and Anatolia as a result of political exile (Nizzoli and Belgiojoso), desertion from the Napoleonic army (Finati), opportunism (Belzoni), and happenstance (Rafanelli). With the exception of the aristocratic Belgiojoso, these are subjects who, in the normal course of things, would have lacked the means that make mobility possible; on the contrary,

Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Malia Hom, eds, *Italian Mobilities* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

11 For a study that ranges from nineteenth-century guidebooks to Italy to postmodern "Venices" around the world, see Stephanie Malia Hom, *The Beautiful Country: Tourism and the Impossible State of Destination Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

12 Roberto Dainotto, *Europe (in Theory)* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007) and Mallette, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean*.

were it not for historical accident, they would have belonged to the ranks of those who remain immobile. Neither colonizer nor colonized, these figures all write from margins that are geographical, political, and, through the textual constraints placed upon women's travel writing, gendered. As residents in the then-Ottoman lands of Muhammad Ali's Egypt (Nizzoli, Finati, and Belzoni) and Anatolia (Belgiojoso), and in an Islamic Orient of her own imagining (Rafanelli), they produce narratives of transnational mobility that portray their encounter with Islamicate cultures as a transformative one in which the possibility of conversion to Islam, or "turning Turk," as it was called in its early modern English formulation, and the practice of cultural cross-dressing, play important roles. Crossing class, gender, dress, and religious boundaries as they move about the Mediterranean basin, their accounts variously reconfigure, reconsolidate, and often destabilize the imagined East–West divide that forms the foundation of every Orientalism. Although united by their birth on the peninsula known as Italy, and by travel to Ottoman-governed lands, they fall quite differently on a spectrum that ranges from the Islamophobia of Nizzoli and Belgiojoso to the Islamophilia of Leda Rafanelli, and from Giovanni Finati's passing as Albanian to the composite "Egyptian" identity of Leda Rafanelli's posing.

Chapter 1, "Detourism: The Orientalism of Amalia Nizzoli's Egyptian Memoirs," analyzes the account of Amalia Nizzoli, who traveled to and resided in Egypt in the wake of the Napoleonic invasion, from 1819 to 1828, and wrote *Memorie sull'egitto e specialmente sui costumi delle donne orientali e gli harem, scritte durante il suo soggiorno in quel paese'* [Memories of Egypt, and Especially of the Customs of Oriental Women and Harems, Written during her Sojourn in that Country]. Predictably framed in the Orientalist terms that imagine the harem as a space that yields up its truth only to European women, Nizzoli's text more interestingly allows us to see her own "Italianization" as the by-product of the very strategies put to work in the Orientalization that also characterizes her text. I argue that the political instability of home (an Italy that is not yet a nation state) leads to a heightened volatility of identity abroad, one that allows reversibilities between Orientalization and Italianization to become visible. What emerges from her account, read against the background of other contemporary accounts by Italian exiles, diplomats, and adventurers in post-Napoleonic Egypt, is the contingency of national and religious identities and the malleability of Italian identity in particular. In Nizzoli's case, the reversibility of such identities reaches its limit when the possibility of conversion to Islam is openly acknowledged and entertained, and quickly and Islamophobically foreclosed.

The second chapter, "Hygiene in the Harem: The Orientalism of Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso," examines several works by the Princess Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, an Italian aristocrat and Risorgimento heroine who wrote, for the most part, in French. In exile on account of her active support of the Risorgimento, and in particular her prominent role in the failed Roman Republic of 1848, Belgiojoso took up residence in Anatolia for five years, where she authored *La vie intime et la vie nomade en Orient* (1855) [translated in 1862 as *Oriental Harems and Scenery*], and which inspired *Scènes de la vie Turque* [Scenes of Turkish Life] (1858). Unlike Nizzoli, for whom the possibility of "turning Turk" marked the moment when the world came undone, for Belgiojoso, instead, that moment lies in the specter of class mobility and its fantasized consequences, and its setting is, again, the harem. I show how Belgiojoso's penetration of the harem opens it not to sexual relations but to projects of social reform and hygiene; the promise of transgressive sexual relations is replaced by the threat of transgressive class relations, in which bodies and property come into illicit contact. In this, of course, she is not alone: the Ottoman harem, and Ottoman social organization more generally, have been a particularly fertile site for the cultivation of Western concerns and fantasies about proper and improper class relations and hierarchies. Beginning with early modern Venetian ambassadors, travelers paint a picture of "Oriental splendor" in which social hierarchies form a source of fascination with the Ottoman empire at least equal to that of the harem, and constitute part of the "imperial envy" that Gerald MacLean proposed, in his 2004 *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, should be known as "Ottomanism." I compare and contrast Belgiojoso's account to that of Gérard de Nerval, whose 1851 *Voyage en Orient* was contemporaneous with her own, and for whom the possibilities of "turning Turk" and class mobility are fully enmeshed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ways in which a concern with the making and destruction of character, both individual and national, links her fictional "Oriental tales" and her later writings about newly unified Italy. In her project for reform in Anatolia Belgiojoso is explicitly concerned with conversion – not, however, of Christians to Islam, but of Turks to Christianity; her *Scènes de la vie Turque* aim to separate individual Turkish character from Muslim religious and social norms, so as to find in it fertile terrain for eventual conversion to Christian religious and social norms.

The third chapter, "Male Masquerade in Mecca: Passing and Posing in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," moves away from the harem to examine Mecca as the forbidden space that becomes the site of a masquerade on the

part of a handful of European male Orientalists. It examines the practices of passing and posing as Muslim in nineteenth-century Ottoman Egypt in the memoirs of several European male travelers whose national belonging was riven, whether by force or choice – John Lewis Burckhardt (1784–1817), Giovanni Belzoni (1778–1824), and Giovanni Finati (1787–date unknown). One of the chapter's principal concerns is to theorize the nature of this cross-cultural "passing" and "posing" in relation to the national identities in question. Briefly put, those who pose simulate something that they are not, whereas those who pass dissimulate something that they are; those who pose insist on exhibiting their distinction and distance, often theatrically so, from a stigmatized identity, whereas those who pass cover over both their distinction from an identity that confers privilege and their efforts to do so. National and cultural prestige and privilege are thus internal to the dynamics of passing and posing, and have much to reveal about the relations among the British, Italian, Swiss, Albanians, Turks, and Egyptians (among others) who find themselves thrown together in nineteenth-century Egypt. These travelers appear in each other's narratives, their itineraries overlap and intersect, and their national and religious affiliations drift along with their migrations. Burckhardt and Finati both converted to Islam and passed as Muslim throughout their lives as travelers in Egypt and the Middle East: Burckhardt strategically so, Finati rather more accidentally. Belzoni adopted local dress as a practical measure, but his conversion remained merely sartorial. All three published their accounts in English with the aid of editors and translators, and were thus better known to British Orientalists, and to an English readership, than in their countries of origin. The chapter therefore juxtaposes their narratives with that of the much better-known figure of Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890) who, like his predecessors Finati and Burckhardt, made the pilgrimage to Mecca. For Burton, however, it was a point of pride that he entered Mecca not as a renegade but in a disguise – physical, linguistic, cultural, and semiotic – so successful, he claimed, that his identity as an infidel was undetected by his fellow pilgrim, with one crucial exception. I argue that Burton "posed," rather than passed, and thus required an audience that was in the know: "the boy Mohamed," who functions as a stand-in for the reader who would admire the simulation of the pose.

In Chapter 4, "Muslim in Milan: The Orientalisms of Leda Rafanelli," I turn to a rather different case of cultural cross-dressing and conversion to Islam, that of Leda Rafanelli (1880–1971), and hence also a different historical moment in the making of Italian national identity. The stage upon which she posed was that of twentieth-century Milan, and the audience for

her posing was, on the one hand, a small readership made up mostly of fellow anarchists and, on the other, the camera itself. Unlike those of her nineteenth-century predecessors, Rafanelli's "ethnomasquerade" was performed with the promise neither of commercial profit nor the thrill of transgressive passing on sacred ground. And, unlike other cross-cultural cross-dressing female travelers, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Grace Ellison, and Isabelle Eberhardt, Rafanelli did not favor the divided skirt, or *şalvar* (widely referred to by Westerners as "harem pants"), that was associated with freedom from strictures of femininity, both physical and social, but rather combined an "Egyptian" aesthetic with a "Gypsy" overlay that emphasized an Orientalized femininity. Drawing upon a long tradition that understood "Gypsies" to be Egyptians, as well as the late nineteenth-century stereotypical image of the Romany as actively resistant to disciplining by capitalism and the state, Rafanelli fashioned an identity that brought with it both a racialization as non-white and an identification with a transnational minority characterized by a mobility that she herself lacked. I argue that conversion to Islam provided Rafanelli with an alternative site of enunciation and belief from which to critique both Western colonialism and modern femininity. Far from seeking exemption from gender constraints, Rafanelli seems to turn to Islam to find a structure of feeling in which the gender binary appears in starker contrast. The chapter examines a selection of Rafanelli's novels and short stories, and photographs of her in Orientalizing dress, and shows how the biologization of the gender binary is accompanied by a figurative crossing of the divide between races, as well as the divide between human and non-human animals.

The Epilogue, "*Divorce Islamic Style:* Passing and Posing as Muslim and Tunisian in Postcolonial Italy," returns us to twenty-first-century postcolonial Italy and a reprisal of the topos of passing and posing as Muslim in order to enter a sacred space on the part of an Italian–Algerian writer, Amara Lakhous, in his 2010 novel *Divorzio all'islamica a Viale Marconi* [*Divorce Islamic Style*]. The thematization of conversion to Islam links the early twenty-first century to the nineteenth in an embrace that conjures with Islamophobia and the historical malleability of a weak national identity in the Mediterranean. The site to be infiltrated, however, is no longer Mecca, but rather a multicultural call center in Rome known as "Little Cairo." In this reversal of the centrifugal movement of colonization, Little Cairo serves as new contact zone and synecdoche for postcolonial Italy, in which Egyptians, Tunisians, Moroccans, Albanians, Senegalese, Algerians, Bangladeshi, and Italians are brought together and, on a hopeful note made possible by the comedic genre, passing and posing is imagined not as the exception but as the norm in multi-ethnic contemporary Italy.

It remains difficult to find terms that are not themselves either contributors to the imagined geography of Orientalism, as are the terms "the East" and "the Orient," implicated in geopolitical and military enterprises, as is the term "Middle East" itself, or implying a homogeneity, as does the locution "the Muslim world." In his 1974 *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Marshall G. S. Hodgson offered as a solution two terms: rather than the "Islamic world," he proposed the use of "Islamdom," by analogy with Christendom, to refer to the society in which "Muslims and their faith are socially dominant" and of which non-Muslims have always been an integral part, just as Jews have always been an integral part of Christendom; and "Islamicate," on analogy (entirely coincidental, in the context of this study) with the adjective "Italianate," to refer to the culture of that society. As Hodgson explains, Italianate:

> refers not to Italy itself directly, not to just whatever is to be called properly Italian, but to something associated typically with Italian style and with the Italian manner. One speaks of "Italianate" architecture even in England or Turkey. Rather similarly (though I shift the relation a bit), "Islamicate" would refer not directly to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims.[13]

The term "Islamicate" has recently been adopted in just this sense by Katherine Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi in *Islamicate Sexualities: Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire*, and by Joseph Allen Boone in *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*.[14] In all three cases, the works in question deal with a far greater range of cultures, both geographically and historically, than does the present book, and the need to allow for significant variations and heterogeneities is consequently greater. In the present case, the Ottoman empire in its waning years provides a certain commonality between the Egypt in which Nizzoli, Finati, and Belzoni resided in the early nineteenth century and to which Rafanelli traveled in the early twentieth, and the

13 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 58–59.

14 See Katherine Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi, eds, *Islamicate Sexualities: Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); see p. ix for a discussion; and Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*.

Anatolia in which Belgiojoso lived in the mid-nineteenth century, even as differences in local demographics and customs clearly exist, and multiple religions and ethnicities are in constant contact. I have therefore adopted the geographical expression "Ottoman lands" in my own metalanguage to refer to their common destination, without reference to religion, and occasionally use "Islamicate" as a reminder of the dominant religion as well as differences in cultures between the locations and moments in time. I have, however, aimed to preserve the language of my authors when it is the object of my analysis, and hence also make reference to "the Muslim world," "the Orient," and the "East" when it corresponds to usage in the texts in question.

CHAPTER ONE

Detourism: The Orientalism of Amalia Nizzoli's Egyptian Memoirs

Our first accidental Orientalist, Amalia Nizzoli, was barely 13 years old when, in 1819, she embarked upon a voyage with her parents to Egypt, where her uncle was employed as a physician by the son-in-law of the ruling Pasha, Muhammad Ali. When she published her memoirs of nine years of residence in Egypt some 22 years later, she did so by proxy. She herself was still traveling, so Francesco Cusani, a now forgotten erudite, patriot, and translator of Walter Scott, stood in for her with the publishing house, and provided a preface that put her narrative in its proper place. Following the logic of supplementarity that characterizes the placement of women's travel narratives within Orientalist discourse, Cusani first establishes the primacy of Nizzoli's male counterparts, whose abundance of writings ("copia dei libri") has, he claims, rendered superfluous ("superflua") any writings about Oriental "usi e costumi odierni" [present-day manners and customs] and then positions her as remedying a lack as only a woman can:[1]

> Hanno un bel dire certi viaggiatori altieri e vanitosi, ma nel Levante le donne sono custodite con sì vigile gelosia, che avvicinarle e conoscerle non è agevole impresa agli stranieri; e tanto più ai cristiani. E concedendo anche che alcuno per arditezza o per fortuite combinazioni sia riuscito ad amicarsi qualche donna, sarebbe d'uopo supporre in lui molta cognizione nella lingua araba o turca, perchè potesse studiarne le tendenze e le abitudini. Ma generalmente manca ai viaggiatori tempo e volontà di applicarsi a quei difficilissimi idiomi; e coloro che se ne impratichiscono il più delle volte per necessità di commercio non s'occupano di stampare libri, intenti

1 On the logic of supplementarity that situates women within Orientalism, see Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies*.

> come sono ai loro traffichi. Soltanto a una donna era quindi possibile l'internarsi negli harem, studiarne le usanze in ripetute visite durante un lungo soggiorno in paese, e giovandosi della lingua araba, guadagnarsi l'amicizia e la confidenza delle leggiadre abitatrici dei medesimi.[2]
>
> [Let certain vain and haughty travelers talk all they like, but in the Levant women are guarded with such vigilant jealousy that it is not an easy undertaking for foreigners to approach and get to know them, and all the more so for Christians. And even conceding that some, through boldness or happenstance, have succeeded in befriending a woman or two, one would have to imagine that he had a great knowledge of Arabic or Turkish, in order to be able to study their tendencies and habits. But male travelers generally lack the time and will to apply themselves to these difficult idioms; and those who do get some training (usually for business reasons) don't publish books, intent as they are on their trade. Hence it was only possible for a woman to enter deep within the harem, to study customs in repeated visits during a long sojourn in that country and, utilizing Arabic, gain the friendship and confidence of the lovely inhabitants of the harem.][3]

Mobilizing a self-deprecating rhetoric of modesty that will be typical of European women's accounts of the harem in the nineteenth century, the paragraph layers the gendered tropes of plenitude and lack onto the Orientalist ones of the harem as interior space that yields up its truth only to European women, a truth about an Orient feminized in its turn.[4] (And those

2 I cite, from the original edition, Amalia Nizzoli, *Memorie sull'Egitto e specialmente sui costumi delle donne orientali e gli harem, scritte durante il suo soggiorno in quel paese (1819–1828)* (Milan: Pirotta, 1841), vii–viii. Nizzoli's text has been reprinted twice, once by Le Edizioni dell'Elleboro (Naples, 1996), edited and introduced by the Egyptologist Sergio Pernigotti, and once by Mario Adda Editore (Bari, 2002), edited and introduced by the literary critic Mercedes Arriaga. The latter edition is plagued by typographical errors.

3 Nizzoli's narrative has not, to my knowledge, been translated into any language. All translations are my own.

4 On women's privileged relation to representations of the harem, see Emily Apter, "Female Trouble in the Colonial Harem," *Differences* 4:1 (1992): 203–24; Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism*; Grewal, *Home and Harem*. For recent work on European representations of the harem more generally, see in Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind: Passages of Western Art and Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Roberts, *Intimate Outsiders*; and Marilyn Booth, ed., *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

women, like the inhabitants of the harem itself, have time on their hands, time that, in Nizzoli's case, allows her to learn Arabic from a black slave girl.) Cusani, himself the author of an account of his travels to Dalmatia, was likely familiar with the account of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who similarly "penetrated" the harem and was similarly framed.[5] The citationary nature of Orientalism asserts itself here, and the layering of familiar tropes enforces a domestication upon both Nizzoli and the reader. Nizzoli's own introduction, which follows Cusani's preface (although apparently written chronologically before it), reinforces this familiarity. In what reads as an echo, given its placement, it puts femininity on display in a defensive move that we have come to call "womanliness as masquerade," and presents her narrative as the fulfillment of another's desire for knowledge.[6] Here Nizzoli legitimates the publication of her memoirs:

> Le mie note giacevano, posso dirlo schiettamente, dimenticate, se non che recatami a Milano, dove feci una lunga dimora, veniva di continuo interrogata su ciò che aveva visto in Egitto, e specialmente sui costumi delle donne orientali e sugli harem. Ciò fe' nascere in me l'idea di appagare in qualche modo l'altrui curiosità pubblicando qualche cosa sull'Egitto, e massime sui costumi e gli usi femminili di quel paese. Né con tuttociò avrei ardito affrontare il severo giudizio del Pubblico, se non veniva animata da uomini colti ed imparziali cui diedi a leggere le note raccolte ne' miei viaggi. Mi andavano essi osservando che nipote d'un medico alla corte di Mehemed-Aly, e moglie d'un uffiziale consolare austriaco, io m'era trovata in una posizione assai favorevole per conoscere il paese. Aggiungasi che avendo imparato tosto che giunsi colà, la lingua araba, riuscivami facile di meglio studiare gli usi del Levante, e di stringere amicizia colle donne, penetrando negli harem, inaccessibili agli stranieri. (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, xiv–xv)
>
> [My notes lay, I can say it frankly, forgotten, when, having gone to Milan for a long stay, I was constantly interrogated about what I had seen in Egypt,

5 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters were published in 1763, and translated into Italian in 1838, published by the Tipografia del governo on the island of Corfu. Cusani would have had access to them both in English and in Italian.

6 I refer to Joan Riviere's now classic 1929 essay "Womanliness as Masquerade," in *Forms of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan (New York: Routledge, 1986), 45–61.

> and especially about the customs of Oriental women and the harem. That gave me the idea of satisfying the curiosity of others in some way by publishing something about Egypt, and especially about the customs and manners of women in that country. Nor should I have made bold to confront the harsh judgment of the Public, had I not been encouraged by cultured and impartial men to whom I gave to read the notes I had gathered during my travels. They told me that, as niece of the doctor at the court of Muhammad Ali and wife of an Austrian consul official, I had found myself in a very favorable position from which to get to know the country. And since I had learned Arabic soon after arriving there, it was easy for me to study the customs of the Levant, and to form friendships with the women by penetrating into the harem, inaccessible to foreigners.]

The passage sounds several notes that will be familiar to readers of British and French women's Orientalist narratives. The trope of "penetrating the harem," the portrayal of the woman as "appendage" to her male relatives, the specification that it is male curiosity that is being satisfied (the association of women and curiosity itself a cultural taboo): if nothing else, Nizzoli's disclaimers are evidence of both the textual constraints imposed upon women's travel narratives and the enduring power of Orientalist citationality.[7] This is a story we already know, and both preface and introduction instruct us as readers to train our gaze on the already familiar scene of the harem. That Nizzoli becomes the male Orientalist's proxy is, of course, a nice symmetrical reversal, and her description of the harem is not without interest, as we shall see.[8] For the moment, I would like to direct our attention elsewhere,

7 On the textual constraints that bear upon travel narratives authored by women, see especially Mills, *Discourses of Difference*. See also Lowe, *Critical Terrains*; Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994); Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

8 For an analysis of the harem scene, see Graziella Parati, "Penetrating" the Harem, 'Giving Birth' to Memory: Amalia Nizzoli's *Memorie sull'Egitto*," *Romance Languages Annual* 6 (1994): 333–39. On Nizzoli, see also Anna Vanzan, *L'Egitto di Amalia Nizzoli: Lettura del diario di una viaggiatrice della prima metà dell'ottocento* (Bologna: Il nove, 1996); Mirella Scriboni, "Il viaggio al femminile nell'Ottocento: La principessa di Belgiojoso, Amalia Nizzoli e Carla Serena," *Annali d'Italianistica* 14 (1996): 304–25; Anna Vanzan, "Viaggiatrici italiane e Orientalismi diversi: le donne dell'Islam attraverso gli occhi di Amalia Nizzoli e Carla Sereni," *Spazi Segni Parole:Percorsi di viaggiatrici*

and cast a sidelong glance to a different moment of domestication in both preface and introduction. That moment occurs in the final paragraph of his preface, when Cusani writes: "Del resto, lasciando al Pubblico il giudizio sul merito di queste Memorie, è bello e consolante il vedere anche le nostre Italiane dar saggio d'ingegno e d'amore per le lettere" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, xi) [Besides, leaving to the Public to judge the merit of these memoirs, it is good and consoling to see even our Italian women give proof of talent and love for letters]. "Our Italian women": it is March 6, 1841, and Cusani writes in a Milan under Austrian control, in an "Italy" that has yet to be made. With his final, possessive gesture – *le nostre italiane* – Cusani seems to enlist Nizzoli's narrative in a nationalizing campaign. And Nizzoli's introduction ends with what reads like a dutiful response to the interpellation:

> Tanti uomini d'ingegno scrissero finora sull'Egitto, che assurda ed anche ridicola sarebbe soltanto l'idea di collocarmi fra essi. No, questo non fu mai il mio scopo; sempre incerta e timorosa sul partito da prendere, se alfine mi arressi alle ripetute insinuazioni di dare alla luce queste Memorie, non fu che colla mira di far conoscere, come donna italiana, alle mie concittadine i costumi e le usanze da me esaminati, aneddoti ed avventure o non troppo noti, o grandemente travisati. (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, xvii)
>
> [So many men of talent have written about Egypt that even the idea of placing myself among them would be absurd and ridiculous. No, this was never my aim. Always uncertain and timid about the course of action to take, if in the end I surrendered to repeated urgings to bring to light these Memoirs, it was only with the goal, as an Italian woman, of making known to my fellow citizens the customs and manners that I had examined, anecdotes or adventures that were either little known or greatly distorted.]

As if a display of femininity alone were not enough to ward off punishment for the cultural crime of transgressing onto the territory of "tanti uomini d'ingegno," Nizzoli adds a nationalizing address: "come donna italiana" [as an Italian woman], she addresses only her "concittadine" [fellow female citizens]. I am interested in asking about this address, both as possessive interpellation on the part of Cusani and as apotropaic on the part of Nizzoli. What is

italiane, ed. Federica Frediani, Ricciarda Ricorda and Luisa Rosi (Milan: Francoangeli, 2012), 65–80.

"consoling" about "our Italian women"? In what economy of loss and gain does Nizzoli's travel narrative enter in relation to the nation here invoked?

These questions arise from a broader set concerning modern Italian travel writing and its specificity. To be sure, the linking of "travel writing" and "modern Italy" is more likely to evoke the *voyage en Italie*, the Grand Tour, the *Italienische Reise*: voyages of northern Europeans to Italy. Scholarship has tended to represent modern Italy as a place more traveled to, constructed as northern Europe's southern other, than a place traveled from.[9] Indeed, as Georges Van den Abbeele has aptly put it in *Travel as Metaphor,* Italy has been positioned as Europe's "internal other," gendered and racialized in many of the ways that such an othering implies.[10] In this chapter I want to ask about what happens, then, when Europe's "internal other" travels to Europe's "external other," when the imagined geography of north and south is crossed by that of Orient and Occident. In what ways does the fact that early nineteenth-century Italy belonged to a dominated fraction (in Nizzoli's case, Austria) of the dominant world situate the Italian subject differently in relation to structures of domination, and hence also in relation to Orientalist and colonial discourses? In what ways does the late arrival of Italy to nationhood alter the way in which "home" is retroactively constructed through travel, and intervene

9 Although there has been a boom in work on travel writing in Italian in the last several decades, it has been particularly focused on the early modern period, on the one hand, and on the writing of immigrants to contemporary Italy on the other, leaving the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – what I am here referring to as "modern" – largely unexplored. An exception is Burdett, *Journeys through Fascism*. For an important reflection on the place of travel writing in Italian literary culture, see Cachey, "An Italian Literary History of Travel." Dedicated to "L'odeporica/Hodoeporics: On Travel Literature," this volume was edited by Luigi Monga, as was a second *Annali d'italianistica* 21 (2003), devoted to "Hodoeporics Revisited/Ritorno all'odeporica." For a study of Italy as tourist destination, see Hom, *The Beautiful Country*.

10 See Georges Van den Abbeele, *Travel as Metaphor: From Montaigne to Rousseau* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992). Nathalie Hester also adopts Van den Abbeele's notion of the *oikos* in her study of Italian travel and identity in the seventeenth century, *Literature and Identity*. On internal othering and "southernist discourse," see Pasquale Verdicchio, *Bound by Distance: Rethinking Nationalism Through the Italian Diaspora* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997); Schneider, *Italy's "Southern question"*; John Dickie, *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860–1900* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999); Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*; Moe, *The View from Vesuvius*; Dainotto, *Europe (In Theory)*; Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema: Race, Landscape, and the Picturesque* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

in what Edward Said has called the "textual attitude" of the Orientalist?[11] Might the ideological effects of Italian Orientalist intertextuality assume a shape different from those of France or of England not only on account of Italy's belated arrival to the scene of colonial acquisition but also on account of the long history of Italian presence, both as population and as language, throughout the Mediterranean basin, and especially in lands of the Ottoman empire?[12] One might argue, in fact, that the Italian traveler is both doubly belated with respect to her European counterparts – not only does s/he arrive on the scene after the signs of Western hegemony have already reached it (as Ali Behdad has argued is the case for the nineteenth-century French exoticists), but those signs are always reminders of an other, specifically national belatedness – and yet also may discover Italians to have been, historically, a part of the social fabric itself.

These are some of the questions that I have set out to answer by looking at Amalia Nizzoli's 1841 *Memorie sull'Egitto e specialmente sui costumi delle donne orientali e gli harem scritte durante il suo soggiorno in quel paese (1819–1828)* [Memories of Egypt and Especially of the Customs of Oriental Women and Harems, Written During a Sojourn in that Country (1819–1828)]. An account of nine years of travel and residence in Egypt, it provides an opportunity to explore the questions I have posed at an early moment in the nineteenth century when imagining the nation-to-come as a homogeneity is made possible by departing from the heterogeneous reality that was post-Napoleonic, Risorgimento "Italy." I want to look beyond the apotropaic display of femininity that Nizzoli is compelled to perform, and ask about how, and indeed whether, a national home, whose existence Cusani implies, is imagined.

In Nizzoli's case, the status of "home" is uncertain from the get-go, and both points of departure and destination turn out to be deviations. Born in Tuscany in 1806 to parents who were themselves expatriates from Turin – "espatriarono in occasione delle truppe francesi all'epoca della rivoluzione repubblicana" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 2) [expatriated on the occasion of French

11 See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

12 On the Italian presence in the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period, see Eric R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinopole: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), and E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012). On the Italian presence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Attilio De Gasperi and Roberta Ferrazza, eds, *Gli Italiani di Istanbul: Figure, comunità e istituzioni dalle riforme alla repubblica 1839–1923* (Turin: Fondazione Agnelli, 2007).

troops during the epoch of the republication revolution] – Nizzoli's trip to Egypt, the subject of these memoirs, turns out to be a deviation from a different voyage. In August 1819 she and her family are on the eve of departure for Turin from Livorno, in a repetition of a previous trip, "dietro un precedente viaggio fatto qualche anno avanti coi miei genitori," of which she had "conservata alcuna memoria" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 2) [after a previous voyage made several years before with my parents, of which she had retained no memory]. Their belongings have already been loaded onto the ship, when a letter from an uncle in Egypt arrives, causing the family to change its destination to Alexandria: "nè più dunque a Torino, ma in Egitto fu diretto il nostro viaggio. Le robe vennero in conseguenza trasferite da un bastimento all'altro" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 3) [thus no longer to Turin, but to Egypt was our ship headed. Our things were consequently transferred from one ship to another].[13] Her point of departure could thus be said to be not Livorno but, rather, the voyage to Turin; she departs from a voyage internal to "Italy" in order to undertake another, external to "Italy." Hers is an originary detour, a transfer from one trip to another. Detourist rather than tourist, she is, as she puts it, "destinata a viaggiare sempre" [destined to travel forever], and it is uncertain whether her voyage has what Van den Abbeele has called an "*oikos*."

Playing on its etymological links to both home and economy, Van den Abbeele has theorized the *oikos* as the point of reference and stability in relation to which one can measure loss or gain in the economy of travel, a point that can be the beginning and the end. In other words, home as the spot in relation to which wandering can be understood as travel, and travel can be understood to be a structure of meaning. Paradoxically, however, this "stable point" that puts an end to travel by always bringing it home is

13 Amalia Sola Nizzoli's uncle, Filiberto Marucchi, was a physician in the service of Muhammad Bey al- Defterdar of Upper Egypt, son-in-law of Muhammad Ali, and one in a long line of European, and especially Italian, doctors in Ottoman and Muslim courts. He is mentioned in Belzoni's *Narrative* as "Doctor Moroki" and portrayed as plotting against Belzoni and in cahoots with the Defterdar-bey in excavating sphinxes at Luxor that Belzoni felt to be his property since he, the never humble Belzoni, claimed to have discovered them. This was in the spring of 1817 (Giovanni Belzoni, *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia; and of a Journey to the Coasts of the Red Sea, in Search of the Ancient Berenice; and Another in the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon* [London: John Murray, 1820], 165). Brief biographical sketches of Marucchi, Giuseppe Nizzoli, and Amalia Nizzoli are included in L. A. Balboni, *Gl'Italiani nella civiltà egiziana del secolo XIX°: Storie, biografie, monografie* (Alexandria: Pennason, 1906), I: 276–78.

itself only constructed retroactively. Home is thought only by traveling, only by leaving it behind, and, by the same token, travel also poses the threat that home might be disrupted, that the one you leave might not be the one to which you return. If this paradox is built into the economy of travel in a general sense, it may also provide a place where we can begin to locate some of the specificity of modern Italian travel, precisely on account of an awareness of the historical instability of the point of reference called home. In the case of the proper name "Italy," of course, that instability is overdetermined; Italy is always already a melancholic space possessed only through exile and loss. In Nizzoli's case, the difficulty of pinpointing an "originary" departure is the result of a more historically specific instability; the family is already displaced by Napoleonic troops and the republican revolution, and allusions to European revolutions and uprisings haunt her text. And it will turn out to be equally difficult to bring the voyage to an end. Her memoirs in fact do not conclude, but end with a promise of an appendix in which she would recount her subsequent travels and the "usi e costumi" this time not of Egypt but of the island of Zante (Zakinthos) where she finds herself in 1835. Unlike Lady Montagu, whose letters are tethered to her *oikos* by their very address to British ladies and gentlemen, Nizzoli's text is set adrift, her *oikos* shown to be mediated and unstable. If such a drifting is a characteristic of travel narratives in general, insofar as they tend to follow a metonymical itinerary from one location to another, rather than to be plotted, in Nizzoli's case this drift is exacerbated by the precariousness of national address. Hers is what James Clifford might call a "dwelling in travel"; I propose to call it instead "detourism," with equal emphasis on the necessity of "detour" and a relation to "tourism" itself.[14] The relation to tourism is a double one. On the one hand, one is loath to categorize Nizzoli's movement between Europe and Egypt as "touristic." This is not to reinstate a specious distinction between "traveler" and "tourist," but rather to register the coercion and violence that characterize her traveling, and of which she is, by virtue of her gender, class, and racialization, both the subject and the object.[15] To be sure, she travels

14 See James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 17–46.

15 As Jonathan Culler has argued, the very distinction between travelers and tourists is integral to tourism itself, and turns ideologically around a discourse of authenticity according to which the "traveler" would be characterized by an authenticity for which the "tourist" can only yearn. See Jonathan Culler, "The Semiotics of Tourism," *American Journal of Semiotics* 1:1–2 (1981): 127–40. See also Georges Van Den Abbeele, "Sightseers: The Tourist as Theorist," *Diacritics* 10 (Winter 1980): 3–14, a critique of

in the wake of the Napoleonic invasion as part of the European pillaging of Egyptian antiquities, and is welcomed by the ruling Pasha as well as by European diplomatic circles. Yet she also travels not of her own choosing, and endures long quarantines and perilous sea voyages, during one of which her infant daughter, who has already lost an eye to ophthalmia, dies and is tossed overboard against the wishes of Nizzoli herself.[16] On the other hand, however, if home is constructed retroactively as a result of the "detour" that is travel, in the case of Nizzoli that home is also "Italianized" through the imposition of a touristic template.[17] Dominated at home, Italians could appear to be

Dean MacCannell's now classic *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken, 1976).

16 It is worth noting that hotels and guidebooks for Europeans traveling to Egypt appear only in the mid-nineteenth century, and that luxury steamers are introduced only in the 1830s. Nizzoli and her family, instead, rough it. For example, they must provide their own foodstuffs on sea voyages: on the first return trip to Italy they took along one hundred chickens, two sheep and a goat! By the time Nizzoli's account appeared in 1841, a number of classic Orientalist texts had been published. For example, Edward Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* was first published in 1836, and John Gardner Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* in 1837. For a useful account of late nineteenth-century British "scripting" of Egypt, see Derek Gregory, "Scripting Egypt: Orientalism and the Cultures of Travel," in *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing*, ed. James Duncan and Derek Gregory (New York: Routledge, 1999), 114–50. Annie Vivanti's 1925 *Terra di Cleopatra*, fully the product of fashionable mass tourism to Egypt, might be usefully compared to Nizzoli's in the context of a distinction between kinds of travel, as well as in that of nationalizing projects.

17 What I have in my mind is hence different from the way that "detour" has been employed in postcolonial discourse, in the wake of Édouard Glissant. Glissant has written of the relation between "rétour" and "détour" for the transplanted peoples of the Caribbean, for whom a "return" to origins is made possible only through a "detour" that Glissant considers a "ruse." The detour allows the subject to discover the source of domination by an Other: "Le détour est le recours ultime d'une population dont la domination par un Autre est occultée: il faut aller chercher *ailleurs* le principe de domination, qui n'est pas evident dans le pays même: parce que le mode de la domination (l'assimilation) est le meilleur des camouflages, parce que la matérialité de la domination (qui n'est pas l'exploitation seulement, qui n'est pas la misère seulement, qui n'est pas le sous-développement seulement, mais bien l'éradication globale de l'entité économique) n'est pas directement visible" [Detour is the ultimate resort of a population whose domination by an Other is concealed: it then must search elsewhere for the principle of domination, which is not evident in the country itself: because the system of domination (assimilation) is the best camouflage, because the materiality of domination (which is not only exploitation, which is not only misery, which is not only underdevelopment, but actually the complete eradication of an economic entity) is not directly tangible]. As

dominant abroad, where they could adopt a stance as "Europeans" superior to "Orientals," or, more specifically in Nizzoli's case, as "Franks" who, in service to the Pasha, were superior to the "Arabs" and "Egyptians." Returning home, in fact, it was through the eyes of a sightseer and detourist that Nizzoli experienced the Italy to which she returned.

Indeed, I want to suggest that Nizzoli's text allows us to see her own "Italianization" as the by-product of the very strategies put to work in the Orientalization that also characterizes her text. On the sea voyage bound for Alexandria, Nizzoli characterizes herself and her fellow passengers not as "Italians" but as "toscani," "bresciani," "napoletani' [Tuscans, Brescians, Neapolitans], according to their regional identities, along with a "Greco" [Greek] and an "Ebreo" [Jew]. In itself, recourse to regional identities is not particularly surprising, especially given the historical moment. But it is striking that it is only after she has arrived and entered the quarter where live the "molti Europei che i nativi appellano Franchi" [many Europeans whom the natives call Franks] that anyone will be referred to as "Italian."[18] It is as

his most significant example, Glissant offers the Martinican Frantz Fanon's involvement in the Algerian cause, "immense et enthousiasmant Détour." [a grand and intoxicating Detour] Édouard Glissant, *Le discours Antillais* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981), p. 32, translation modified from Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, Trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989). Vivek Dhareshwar has taken up Glissant's term "détour," adapting it to refer to the sociohistorical experience of colonial and postcolonial intellectuals, for whom "being colonized meant having to view themselves from the *symbolic positions* in the metropolis, whether or not they were actually located there." See Vivek Dhareshwar, "Toward a Narrative Epistemology of the Postcolonial Predicament," *Inscriptions* 5 (1989), http://ccs.ihr.ucsc.edu/inscriptions/volume-5/vivek-dhareshwar/. In the case of Nizzoli, we are clearly not dealing with populations transferred by slave trade, nor with economic misery, as in the cases discussed by these two critics.

18 There are at least two competing explanations for the origin of the term "Franks." The most reliable considers it to have referred originally to the Germanic founders of Charlemagne's empire. The association with the geographical area that is now France encouraged an association with the French. See, for example, Guido Cifoletti, *La lingua franca mediterranea* (Padua: Unipress, 1989), 5, and Mallette, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean*, 126. Another tradition aims to disjoin "Frank" from its association with the "French." According to Angelo Sammarco, the use of the term "Frank" to refer to Europeans arose in ninth-century Spain, and as a term to distinguish between those Europeans who were subjects of the Byzantine empire, known as *rumi*, and those who were instead free, or *frang*. In Sammarco's account, the term was then adopted to refer to those who enjoyed the exemptions and privileges offered by the Capitulations in the Levant. Sammarco was both a learned Egyptologist and a fascist, and his etymological

though Nizzoli first becomes European by residing in the Frankish quarter and by being the object of the "Turkish" gaze, and only after this mediation through "Europe," as it were, is she identified as Italian.[19]

Gender plays an important role in this Europeanization. As is typical in accounts by women travelers, their dress and unveiled faces make them the object of what is recounted as a violent gaze. In Nizzoli's case, what stands out is both her Europeanization through that gaze and the degree to which she gives us to see that it is merely the reversal of her own "picturesque gaze." In one of many crowd scenes, in which the Oriental crowd offers itself as "spettacolo" [spectacle] and "quadro sorprendente" [surprising tableau], Nizzoli begins as owner of the gaze and painter of the "picturesque":

> Tutto questo insieme di tumulto e di confusione, in tempo di notte, sotto un cielo sereno, in paese turco, offriva una singolare originalità ed eccitava in me meraviglia, che all'età di tredici anni rapisce facilmente e sorprende [...] Egli è sempre bello veder un Grande turco a cavallo [...] era un colpo d'occhio unico e sorprendente, senonchè la tema sovverchiava in me lo stupore. (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 40–42)
>
> [This whole combination of tumult and confusion, at nighttime, under a clear sky, in a Turkish country, offered a singular originality and excited in me a marveling which, at the age of thirteen, easily ravishes and surprises ... . It is always wonderful to see a Turkish Grandee on horseback ... it was a unique and surprising sight (*colpo d'occhio*), except that fear overwhelmed my stupefaction.]

explanation is framed by nationalistic bragging about Italy's dominant presence in Egypt: in this particular case, the fact that a version of Italian was the lingua franca of the Mediterranean, and that "Frank" is not to be confused with "French." Consistent with the fascist regime's portrayal of Italians as "un popolo di viaggiatori e navigatori," Sammarco celebrates the "contributo italiano" to the modernization of Egypt in *Gli italiani in Egitto: Il contributo italiano nella formazione dell'Egitto moderno* (Alexandria, Egypt: Edizioni del fascio, 1937).

19 Although it is not always clear what language Nizzoli speaks at various points within the narrative – Arabic, French, and the standard Italian in which she writes are all possibilities – she does refer to her mother tongue as "italiano" a few days after her arrival in Egypt. In transit from Alexandria to Rosetta, she and her family seek refuge in the desert and are greeted by "una persona con voce rauca bensi, ma che mi pareva angelica, poichè parlava in italiano" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 25) [a person with a hoarse voice that nonetheless seemed to me angelic, because it spoke in Italian].

The "colpo d'occhio" turns the scene into a "quadro," a "meraviglia," a tableau, and a marvel that fixes and manages a threat posed by difference – here, the tumult and confusion, the Turkish officer on horseback. Indeed, in an earlier passage Nizzoli had written that the "quadro," the tableau, "arrested" the step of the European visitor, thereby attributing to the scene itself what is instead the function of the form of representation, insofar as it works to "arrest" and fix difference: "tutto ciò presenta un quadro il più singolare, straordinario, e pittoresco che mai si possa imaginare. E questo quadro arresta ad ogni momento il passo ed attira l'attenzione dell'Europeo viaggiatore" (13) [All of this presents the most singular, extraordinary and picturesque tableau that one could ever imagine. And this tableau arrests the step and attracts the attention of the European traveler].[20] But in Nizzoli's text reversals are never far away. Indeed, the next sentence reverses the gaze and directs it at the women:

> I Turchi ci guardavano con aria di curiosità e derisione: tre sole donne in abito europeo a viso scoperto […] vedendoci, si divertivano facendo ad un tratto correre di carriera aperta i loro cavalli verso di noi, arrestandoli colla celerità del lampo […] ad ogni passo Turchi, signori e soldati scaricavano pistole e fucili in segno di allegrezza e di gioia: non era quindi neppure difficile che fossimo colpiti da qualche palla per azzardo o per intenzione trattandosi d'infedeli; giacché è sempre un merito che i Turchi credono acquistare presso Maometto, uccidendoli. (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 43–44)
>
> [The Turks looked at us with an air of curiosity and derision: three women alone in European dress with their faces uncovered […] seeing us, they entertained themselves by racing their horses toward us, stopping them on a dime […] at each step the Turks, civilians and soldiers shot off pistols and rifles in a sign of happiness and joy: it therefore wasn't unlikely that we could be hit (*colpiti*) by some bullet by chance or by intention, since we were infidels. For by killing infidels, Turks believe that they get credit with Muhammad.]

The passage begins with harmless curiosity on the part of the Turks, but quickly veers toward derision and ends with homicidal intent. This last move

20 For a discussion of the way in which the picturesque works to "contain the threat posed by the other by arranging it into an aesthetic frame," see Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, eds, *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 48.

is typical of Nizzoli's text, which lets us see Orientalizing at work, even in the face of knowledge that might counter it. Here, in fact, Nizzoli knows that the shooting of guns and rifles is ceremonial, part of the festivities, a sign of gaiety and joy, and yet all the same she closes off the sentence by re-invoking the possibility of being "colpiti" [stricken] intentionally, and thus renders the gaze murderous. It is all the more striking, then, that the sentence that immediately follows this last one returns to the picturesque: "In somma quella strada tanto affollata e che offriva il più magnifico colpo d'occhio, e che per qualunque altro sarebbe stata gran sorte il percorrere in così rara circostanza, era per me in quel momento eterna ed insopportabile" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 45) [In short, that crowded street that offered the most magnificent sight, and which for any else would be a stroke of luck to cross it in such a rare circumstance, was for me in that moment eternal and unbearable]. The split between the aestheticizing "colpo d'occhio" and the threatening possibility of being "colpiti" by the Turkish gaze is typical of the ambivalence that Homi Bhabha has addressed in such dramatizations of seeing and being seen on the colonial stage, here enacted already in what C. A. Bayly has characterized as "para-colonial" Egypt.[21] What I want to underline here is that Nizzoli's text demonstrates clearly that these gazes are two sides of the same coin. Her picturesque, Orientalizing gaze is returned to her as the threatening gaze that, however, is needed to dress her as European, "in abito europeo" [in European dress]. It is worth noting the role of curiosity

21 See Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question," in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 66–84. Of course at this point the Europeans in Egypt are not *strictu sensu* colonizers; however, I find helpful here C. A. Bayly's use of "para-colonial" to refer to Egypt as a modernizing state that developed alongside the colonizing designs of European states, in *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (London: Longman, 1989), 228–29. See also Timothy Mitchell's use of "colonial" in the context of nineteenth-century Egypt, to refer to the "colonizing nature of the power that the occupation [of Egypt by Great Britain in 1882] sought to consolidate, a power which began to develop around the beginning of the century if not earlier." Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 14. Italians are part of this apparatus of power, albeit in a subordinate way. For example, according to Albert Hourani, the teachers in the first schools established by Muhammad Ali were Italians, and "Italian – then the *lingua franca* of the Levant – was the first European language to be taught. But it was soon replaced by French." See Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 53. Similarly, the first group of students to be sent to study abroad were sent, in 1908, to Pisa and Livorno, to study military science, ship-building, printing, and engineering. See Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 168.

here: just as the curious one herself becomes a curiosity, so the observing traveler turns upon the same axis, becoming the object of observation.[22] Much later in the text Nizzoli provides us with yet another example. Having visited the pyramids, she and her companions settle into "stone rooms" that had been tombs and admire the view while the cook sets about preparing lunch: "Era un bel colpo d'occhio vedere […] la varietà di que' bei tappeti di verdeggiante coltura, in mezzo alla quale vedevasi scorrere con indescrivibile placidezza il tortuoso Nilo" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 256) [It was a beautiful sight to see […] the variety of those beautiful carpets of green cultivation, through which the tortuous Nile flowed with indescribable placidity]. They are surrounded by their servants and the Bedouins who had served as their guides inside the Pyramid of Cheops: "V'assistevano, oltre i nostri servi e Sais, molti Beduini che ci avevano guidati dentro le Piramidi, alcuni in piedi, altri seduti sulle calcagna, osservando curiosamente i nostri usi e costumi" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 257) [Besides our servants and Sais, many Bedouins who had guided us into the Pyramids were present, some on foot, others sitting on their heels, curiously observing our manners and customs]. Here again in close proximity the "colpo d'occhio" of the aestheticizing European gaze is returned to the Europeans, this time in a doubling of Nizzoli herself, and her own proto-anthropological participant-observation of local "usi e costumi" is taken over by those she herself usually observes.

Once European (or, more precisely, Frankish in the Levant), she may become Italian. As it happens, the first person to be referred to as "Italian" is her future husband, chancellor of the Austrian consulate to whom she is married by proxy. He is the second to ask for her hand; the first, a certain Paolo D'Andrea, was refused not because she was barely 14 years old but because he had "gone native": "vestiva alla turca ed aveva adottato tutte le usanze orientali" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 64) [he dressed in the Turkish mode and had adopted all the Oriental customs]. Mr. Nizzoli, instead, is presented to her as a real catch principally because he has not: "Questo è un uomo giovane, di molto spirito, non va vestito alla turca, come il signor D'Andrea, porta un bell'uniforme, è italiano come voi" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 69) [this is a young man, of great spirit, he doesn't go about dressed in the Turkish mode, like Mr. D'Andrea; he wears

22 On the exchangeability of curiosity and curiousness, and especially its gendering, see Barbara M. Benedict, *A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). Mary Roberts offers a Lacanian analysis of the way in which British women travelers in the Ottoman harem were simultaneously subject and object of the look in *Intimate Outsiders*, 80–91.

a handsome uniform, he is Italian like you]. If her trip to Egypt originated as a detour, her nationalization also requires a detour – a mediation through Europe, and consequently in and through its opposition to the Orient. Here the Orient is identified with the "Turk," a figure for the Ottoman-sanctioned rulers in particular, and for Muslims in general, as we shall see.

This detour is made visible in a second episode in which Nizzoli, now established for some years in Cairo, is forced to travel to Lombardy on account of her husband's health. (Yet another reversal, since traveling away from Europe for one's health is one of the topoi of nineteenth-century European travel narratives). This trip is not a return; Nizzoli has never been to Lombardy, and hears tell of it first from "varii giovani arabi che il Pascià aveva mandati a Milano … ." "Mi parlavano spesso dei nostri paesi," she writes, "per cui io gli interrogava sui progressi del loro viaggio in Italia" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 80–81) [various young Arabs whom the Pasha had sent to Milan … . They spoke to me often of our towns, and so I interrogated them about the progress of their trip to Italy]. In its initial pluralization of "paesi," the sentence makes manifest both the heterogeneity of the place she calls home and its homogenization by travel: "il loro viaggio in Italia" [their voyage to Italy]. What's more, the situation is a symmetrical reversal of the scene that Nizzoli had described in her introduction, when she found herself interrogated by her fellow citizens: "Le mie note giacevano, posso dirlo schiettamente, dimenticate, se non che recatami a Milano, dove feci una lunga dimora, veniva di continuo interrogata su ciò che aveva visto in Egitto" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, xiv–xv) [My notes lay, I can say it frankly, forgotten, when, having gone to Milan for a long stay, I was constantly interrogated about what I had seen in Egypt]. If in Milan her "concittadine" interrogated her about her travels in Egypt, in Cairo she interrogates her "concittadini" – in the sense that they are inhabitants of the same city – about their travels in Italy. And if the result of the former interrogation is her own Orientalizing text, the result of her interrogation of the young Arabs is an Italianizing one. Indeed, having taken a detour through the Orient to Europe, she is about to embark on her own *voyage en Italie*. Just as her picturesque descriptions of Oriental crowds and "le guglie di Cleopatra" [Cleopatra's needles] constituted discursive postcards, so do her descriptions of Milan, Florence, and Naples follow the tourist's itinerary. Here she writes of her first look at Milan:

> Usciti a vedere la città, il primo oggetto che mi colpì fu il celebre Duomo. Rimasi sorpresa e quasi estatica alla vista di così eccelsa e stupenda mole, e non me ne sarei più distaccata. Aveva sentito a parlarne sovente, e mi pareva

> sognare al vederlo co' miei occhi; ed avrei voluto esaminare a un tratto quel magnifico edifizio, enumerarene le statue, le guglie, i trafori [...] ed assai mi piacque il bellissimo corso di porta Orientale. (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 107)
>
> [Having gone out to see the city, the first object to impress me was the famous Duomo. I was surprised and almost ecstatic at the sight of such a sublime and stupendous massive structure, and I would have remained there forever. I had often heard tell of it, and to see it with my own eyes seemed to me a dream. And I would have liked to have examined in detail that magnificent building, to enumerate its statues and spires and perforations [...] and I liked very much the beautiful Corso di Porta Orientale.]

The very same rhetoric that characterizes the Oriental "quadro" appears here as well: the tableau evokes surprise, ecstasy, and a dreamlike state. (And, from the point of view of the argument I am advancing, it is a happy coincidence that she should admire the *corso di porta Orientale*, which legend has it was the gate through which Christianity entered Milan from the Orient.) In Naples she views the city from aboard ship (so as to avoid quarantine) and by the light of the moon: "sembrava un incantesimo [...] formava un quadro sorprendente e veramente poetico. Il Vesuvio in distanza sempre coperto di nubi e di fumo, rendeva completo questo meraviglioso quadro. Era quello per me uno spettacolo nuovo che mi rapiva l'anima" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 135–36) [It seemed a magic spell [...] it formed a surprising and truly poetic tableau. Vesuvius in the distance always covered by clouds and smoke, completed this marvelous picture. It was a new spectacle for me, and it ravished my soul]. Not even her arrival in Livorno, presumably "home," is exempt from the imposition of a touristic template: "Immenso fu il mio giubilo nel rivedere la mia terra nativa! Il rimbombo delle campane che diveniva nuovo per me in quel momento, stantechè in Egitto i Turchi suppliscono ad esse colla voce, gridando dall'alto delle moschee, mi scendeva nel cuore" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 96) [How immense was my joy in seeing again my native land! The tolling of bells, which became new for me in that moment, for in Egypt the Turks supplement the bells with their voices, shouting from the top of the mosques, descended into my heart]. Nizzoli returns to her "terra nativa" as a detour-ist whose point of reference is now no longer Livorno but rather a Europe within the Orient and the travel accounts of the young Arabs who preceded her. Yet, at the same time, an economy of travel is also at play here, for Nizzoli can see anew this native land; she has profited from her travels and rediscovered her "Italian-ness" back home, precisely by "seeing the sights."

But, if there is nationalizing gain, there is also a threat of loss. What I have recounted so far appears in the first part of her text, before the chapters that narrate the life of the harem. The harem chapters lie at the heart of her account, and in some sense constitute its own *oikos*; they appear outside the chronological order that, for the most part, is the structuring principle of the text. After those central chapters, however, the tone changes abruptly, as though Nizzoli had a hunch that the male reader, whose curiosity she had satisfied, might now leave her to her own devices. Having gone through the harem and come out the other side, Nizzoli discards the self-deprecating modesty with which her narrative began. We discover, for example, that in addition to lounging about in the harem Nizzoli has been directing excavations as part of the pillaging of antiquities in which most of the Franks, including Mr. Nizzoli himself, were involved. She tells of shopping at the slave market on one occasion, and of the purchase of a Greek wet nurse from her Turkish captor on another. We learn the back story to one of her male counterparts, Giovanni Belzoni, mentioned in Cusani's preface as among the distinguished writers whose accounts Nizzoli would merely supplement. Belzoni was, and is, famous not only for his 1820 *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries in Egypt and Nubia* but also for the antiquities he brought back to the British Museum; indeed, his *Travels* have been reprinted as recently as 2001 by the British Museum Press, with lavish color illustrations, many of them drawn from the Napoleonic *Description d'Egypte*.[23] Nizzoli cuts him down a notch, recounting his history as failed strongman, a kind of proto-Zampanò (he was famous for the human pyramid), and failed inventor.

> Belzoni che a Malta sulle piazze faceva le forze, e ch'era venuto in Egitto per esercitarvi giuochi di destrezza, essendosi trovato inferiore agli Arabi stessi,

23 Giovanni Belzoni, *Belzoni's Travels: Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries in Egypt and Nubia by Giovanni Belzoni*, edited by Alberto Siliotti (London: The British Museum Press, 2001). This edition was also published in Italy in 2001 by Geodia. The first edition was published in London in 1820 by the publisher John Murray, with the title *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia; and of a Journey to the Coasts of the Red Sea, in Search of the Ancient Berenice; and Another in the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon*. Like the 2001 edition, it ended with his wife Sarah Banne Belzoni's account of her pilgrimage to the Holy Land, *Mrs. Belzoni's Trifling Account of the Women of Egypt, Nubia, and Syria*. According to Alberto Siliotti, Sarah Belzoni had a less than trifling role in writing her husband's account: Belzoni was "probably aided by his wife Sarah to fill the gaps in his rather poor English, which Byron described as 'very prettily broken'" (66).

> diedesi a fare l'idraulico. Propose piani al Pascià che fece venire a grandi spese delle macchine d'Inghilterra per il suo giardino di Schiobra, senza che il Belzoni fosse in caso di porle in opera. Si diede allora ad osservare le cose antiche, e più fortunato che nei giuochi e nell'idraulica, rese celebre il suo nome in Egitto per la scoperta della porta della gran Piramide di Gize, e per quella delle tombe dei re di Tebe. (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 322–23)
>
> [Belzoni, who in Malta did stunts in the streets and who had come to Egypt to perform his games of agility, found himself inferior to the Arabs themselves, and turned to irrigation systems. He proposed plans to the Pasha, who at great expense brought equipment form England for his garden in Schiobra, but Belzoni wasn't able to make it work. So he turned to the observations of antiquities, and more fortunate than in his games or plumbing, he made a name for himself in Egypt for the discovery of the door of the Pyramid at Geza and for that of the tombs of the kings of Thebes.]

We will have more to say about Belzoni in Chapter 3. For the moment, we note that the great Egyptologist is revealed to be a failed muscle man and an inventor of useless irrigation systems: so much for Nizzoli's non-competitive stance! We also discover that Nizzoli is a keen observer of local politics, able to paint a no-longer-picturesque tableau of European activity in Egypt. Now we learn about the European adventurers, speculators, and riff raff who have made their way to Egypt with get-rich-quick schemes in their back pockets. The Frankish quarter in Cairo, it turns out, is full of "molti banditi d'Europa, imputati di omicidi, di bigamia, e latrocini, molti evasi dalle prigioni d'Italia per delitti disonorevoli" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 339) [many banned from Europe, accused of homicide, bigamy, and theft, many escapees from Italian prisons for dishonorable crimes] and is the site of intra-European conflict that Nizzoli characterizes as "rivalry among nations."

It is worth noting that Napoleon has more than a little to do with Nizzoli's story, and with the history of the Italian presence in Egypt. In the wake of Napoleon's occupation of Egypt (1798–1801) and the rise to power of Muhammad Ali, many Europeans found their way to Cairo and Alexandria, drawn not only by antiquities but also by Muhammad Ali's modernizing projects, including the manufacture of arms, the cultivation of long staple cotton, irrigation projects, and his attempt to set up textile factories. Once a merchant himself, Muhammad Ali admired and relied upon European merchants, eager to sell their machines and tools. As Afaf

Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot writes, Muhammad Ali surrounded himself with Armenian secretaries and translators, French technocrats, British experts and merchants, and Italian physicians.[24] After the Restoration in 1815 many others came in search of political asylum. For example, Giambattista Brocchi, author of a travel narrative contemporary to Nizzoli's, *Giornale delle osservazioni fatte ne' viaggi in Egitto, nella Siria e nella Nubia*, had been an inspector of mines for the Regno d'Italia, but after being removed from office with the Restoration he finds his way to Alexandria.[25] Political refugees often went elsewhere (England, France, or Switzerland, especially) before ending up in Egypt, and were thus at least doubly displaced. Thus, by 1819, the Italian population in Egypt had reached 6,000, at least according to one source, and was made up of a mixture of political refugees and profiteers.[26] Additional political immigrants arrive after the constitutional uprisings in 1820 and 1821. At the same time, it is worth taking some distance from notions of an "Italian colony" (as Angelo Sammarco would have it), precisely by pointing to the malleability of the meaning of "Italian" in this cosmopolitan, Levantine community. As trusted advisor for Muhammad Ali, Bernardino Drovetti, a Piedmontese, is by far the best-known "Italian" of Nizzoli's entourage, yet he was Consul General of France between 1810 and 1815, and then again from 1820 to 1829. More interesting is the case of Giovanni Finati, a Ferrarese and author of *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Giovanni Finati, Native of Ferrara*, which is discussed at length in the third chapter.[27] Finati was conscripted into the Napoleonic army in

24 Marsot, *Egypt*, 30.

25 Giambattista Brocchi, *Giornale delle osservazioni fatte ne' viaggi in Egitto, nella Siria e nella Nubia* (Bassano: A. Roberti, 1841–1843). Nizzoli includes a letter from Brocchi to her in her text.

26 See Ersilio Michel, *Esuli italiani in Egitto (1815–1861)* (Pisa: Domus Mazziniana, 1958), 9. Michel sometimes relies uncritically upon the work of Angelo Sammarco, with whom he also shares a celebratory, nationalist tone when describing the role of Italians in modern Egypt, a somewhat worrisome trait given Sammarco's political affiliations. Corrado Masi's *Italia e italiani nell'oriente vicino e lontano* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1936) is similarly framed as presenting the "realtà presente e delle possibilità future" for "l'Italia nostra, l'Italia fascista" (3) [present reality and future possibilities for our Italy, Fascist Italy].

27 The full title is: *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Giovanni Finati, Native of Ferrara Who, under the Assumed Name of Mahomet Made the Campaigns of the Wahabees for the Recovery of Mecca and Medina and Since Acted as Interpreter to European Travellers in Some of the Parts Least Visited of Asia and Africa, Translated from the Italian, As Dictated by Himself, and edited by William John Bankes, Esq.* (London: John Murray, 1830). Having

1805 and deserted to Albania, where he embraced Islam, took on the name "Mahomet," and enrolled in Muhammad Ali's Albanese militia.[28] Fluent in Albanian, he fell into the service of the English Consul, Henry Salt, and then into that of the collector William Bankes; he played an important role in Belzoni's explorations, where he is referred to as "Mahomed, a soldier sent to us by Mr. Salt" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 189) and accompanied Mrs. Belzoni to the Holy Land. In fact, Mrs. Belzoni refers to him simply as "Mr. B.'s dragoman" (interpreter) and writes that "Mahomet passed for an Albanian" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 310). And of course Mr. Nizzoli himself, born in Trieste, is an "Italian" in the service of the Austrian consulate and, strictly speaking, Amalia Nizzoli is also an Austrian subject. Indeed, during the same voyage on which her infant daughter is buried at sea, pirates board the ship looking for loot and women and ask what her "sudditanza" [citizenship] is: she replies "austriaca" [Austrian] rather than *italiana*. What emerges from a reading of these narratives is the fluidity and contingency of national identities and even religious faith. To be sure, this fluidity applied not only to "Italians." As Robert Ilbert has shown in his study of Alexandria between 1830 and 1930, the juridical "labyrinth" of later nineteenth-century Egypt, built upon the system of "capitulations," fostered a situation in which an individual might slide from "indigenous" to "foreign" status and back again, and in which it was not rare for members of a single family to claim different nationalities and hence fall under the protection of different national consuls.[29] Ilbert notes that this same fluidity characterized the tenuous relations of consuls to

searched in vain for the twelve notebooks containing Finati's Italian dictation, Michele Visani translated it into Italian as *Vita e Avventure di Giovanni Finati* (Milan: Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale, 1941).

28 I have maintained the spelling of "Mahomet" in Finati's case, given that this was the favored transliteration in the nineteenth century and the one that appears in his *Narrative*. There are many versions of the name, depending both upon the language of origin and the historical period. The current favored transliteration is "Muhammad."

29 See Robert Ilbert, *Alexandrie 1830–1930* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1996), 64–98. The system of capitulations originated with the Ottomans, and referred to privileges and exemptions accorded by Ottoman and Muslim rulers to citizens of Christian states in Muslim territories. Such citizens were exempt from the jurisdiction and taxation of local authorities, and were answerable only to their own consuls. See also Vittorio Briani, *Italiani in Egitto* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1982), 21; Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York: Norton, 1982; rpt. 2001), 48–49, and Ilbert's discussion. For an analysis of this fluidity as it characterized Italian writers in twentieth-century Alexandria, see Lucia Re, "Alexandria Revisited: Colonialism and the Egyptian works of Enrico Pea and Giuseppe Ungaretti," in *A Place in*

the states that they represented. Often only nominally linked to those states, they were frequently more attached to local interests; Ilbert cites Carlo Rossetti as a case in point. A Triestine who became the consul of Austria and Russia in Egypt in 1780 and subsequently that of Venice, and even in one moment of England, as well as trusted advisor of Muhammad Ali, Rossetti at one point represented at the same time two powers with divergent interests. This fluidity certainly characterizes the "Italians" who appear in Nizzoli's texts as well as her fellow travelers in early nineteenth-century Egypt, Belzoni and Finati. Mr. Nizzoli is second-in-command for the Austrian consulate. Drovetti is the principal representative of the French. Born in Padua and famous first in England as "the Patagonian Samson," Belzoni seems to care little about his "Italian" origins, is on the side of Henry Salt and locates himself solidly with the British. Finati, or rather Hajji Mahomet (since he had made the pilgrimage – Hajj – to Mecca), seems to identify himself fully as Muslim, and when he finds himself in England at the end of his narrative complains of the rude behavior of "boys and idle people" who insult him because of his Albanian dress.[30] This last example is particularly striking, since it stands at the outer edge of admissible transnational mobility, which Ilbert specifies concerned mostly Jews and Christians; the divide between Muslims and *dhimmis* (non-Muslims) remained in place.[31] We will have more to say of these figures and their dealings in Chapter 3.

I would argue that it is this transnational mobility that threatens the patriot Cusani and prompts his attempt to domesticate Nizzoli's narrative. To be sure, it is the object of lament in later celebratory accounts of the role of Italians in modern Egypt. The post-Unification Orientalist L. A. Balboni, for example, is intent upon recuperating the history of Italians in Egypt as part of a genealogy of Italian colonialism, one that sees Venetians as "the English of the Medieval period." Balboni's three-volume 1906 *Gl'Italiani della civiltà egiziana del secolo XIX°* bears the dedication "All'Italia, alle colonie italiane" [To Italy, to Italian colonies], and laments of the period in question:

> Ecco gli ITALIANI che hanno operato la presente civiltà egiziana, che sono stati i principali, gl'indispensabili collaboratori del grande riformatore Mohamed-Ali, ma che in qualsiasi opera voi li cerchiate,

the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present, ed. Patricia Palumbo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 163–96.

30 Finati, *Narrative*, II, 428.

31 Ilbert, *Alexandrie*, 90.

> o non li ritrovate affatto, o li vedete, orribilmente storpiata la dolce desinenza italica de' loro nomi, trasformati in *francesi, inglesi, austriaci* ed INDIGENI – come il Taberna – mentre ai Menou, ai Sèves, ed a tant'altri *rinnegati*, spesso traditori, si conserva loro la gloria d'una patria, anzi si difendono, s'illustrano, se ne fanno degli eroi! Buonaparte, Caffarelli, Andreossi, Drovetti, *debbono essere francesi* – e ciò per non citar che i maggiori; – Minutoli *prussiano*, Rossetti *austriaco*: ITALIANI mai, mai! Spesso, quando lo storico non può tacere un bene grande da essi fatto, diventano *europei*, o – degnazione sopranaturale – vengon designati col nome della regione o della città loro natale [...] Italia non esiste se non quando la si possa denigrare, straziare. (Balboni, *Gl'Italiani*, I, 46. Italics and capitalization in original)
>
> [These were the ITALIANS who constructed the present Egyptian civilization, who were the principal, fundamental collaborators of the great reformer Muhammad Ali; but in whatever work you look at, either you don't find them at all, or you find them, with the sweet Italic endings of their names horribly mangled, transformed into *French, English, Austrians* and NATIVES – like Taberna – while for the Menous, the Sèves, and so many other renegades, often traitors, is saved the glory of a homeland, they are defended, brought as examples, made into heroes! Buonaparte, Caffarelli, Andreossi, Drovetti, *must be French* – to cite only the most important; – Minutoli *Prussian*, Rossetti *Austrian*: ITALIANs never! Often, when the historian cannot pass over a great deed accomplished by them, they become *Europeans*, or – supreme condescension – they are indicated with the name of their native city or region. Italy only exists when she can be denigrated, abused.]

The peevish Balboni has put his finger on a problem of Italian identity that remains current today, and that Aldo Schiavone has encapsulated in the phrase "Italiani senza Italia" [Italians without Italy].[32] The problem has to do with the transformation of the *patria* – in the Italian case, the self-representation of an affinity overlaid onto a geographical space – into a nation state, a transformation that Schiavone claims has yet to take place successfully. In the absence of such a state, geography takes on a fundamental definitional role, as evidenced in the remedy Balboni suggests, whereby all "figli d'Italia, regnicoli

32 Aldo Schiavone, *Italiani senza Italia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1998).

o no" [sons of Italy, of the kingdom or not] could be considered Italian: "vale a dire, quanti vivono entro i nostri naturali confini e parlino la nostra lingua, si *vogliano* essi pure chiamare – ripetiamo – austro-ungarici, svizzeri, francesi, od inglesi, solo perchè si trovano ancora sotto il politico dominio di queste singole Potenze, sia pure per o contro il loro volere" [that is to say, those who live inside our natural confines, even if they wish to be called – we repeat – Austro-Hungarians, Swiss, French, or English, only because they find themselves still under the political domination of these single Powers, whether by or against their will] (Balboni, *Gl'Italiani*, I, 46). But what happens when these "Italians" no longer live within those natural confines? What keeps them from being transformed into "indigeni," as Balboni complains?

One particular episode stands out for the way it brings into focus the processes of nationalization, Italianization, and Orientalization in this mobility. The details are murky, as Nizzoli recounts them, and have a prehistory that establishes an Anglo-Franco-Italian conflict within the Frankish quarter itself. A Milanese entrepreneur had sold the Pasha a plan to build an arms factory as part of the military reform that the Pasha had undertaken. When a French colonel was brought in as director of all arms factories and arsenals it was discovered that the factory built by the Milanese produces not only inferior but downright useless rifles, and the Pasha wants his investment back, demanding reimbursement. The Milanese entrepreneur refuses and manages to flee in woman's dress, but is eventually captured and thrown into a Turkish prison. The British take advantage of the situation and, jealous of the role the French play in the Pasha's reform, fuel the fires of the supporters of the Milanese businessman, described by Nizzoli as "avventurieri" [adventurers] and characterized as Italian: "i partigiani di F. [the Milanese businessman] qualificarono il loro operare di *causa italiana*, come se il Pascià nella sua riforma avesse potuto far capitale di un così immaginario appoggio, piuttosto che dell'influenza del governo di Francia, mal veduto però dagli inglesi" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 337) [the partisans of F. characterized their action as *the Italian cause*, as though the Pasha in his reform could have profited from such an imaginary support, rather than from the influence of the French government, looked down upon, however, by the English]. Into this scenario of intra-European conflict walks a Genoese merchant who has gotten on the wrong side of his own consul (in his case, that of Sardinia), who, for reasons unexplained, threatens to arrest him and return him to Genoa in chains. (The powers of consuls were far greater than those of today's consulates, and included deportation.) Since the "Italian support" is, as Nizzoli suggests, "imaginary," Signor N, as he is called, has nowhere to run, except into the

hands of the French colonel despised by those very same Italian adventurers. Signor N flees to a shop located under French jurisdiction in the Frankish quarter, and is joined there by the colonel, who acts as his defender, and by the Italian riff raff incited by the English against the French. The riff raff are as intent on killing the colonel as they are on capturing N, but N sees a way out: "La disperazione intanto era cresciuta in N a tal punto, che dichiarò che se il suo Console persistesse a volere esercitare contro di lui la sua potestà in modo violento, *si sarebbe piuttosto fatto Turco*" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 340) [Meanwhile, N's desperation had grown to such a point that he declared that if his Consul persisted in violently exercising his rights over him, *he would rather turn Turk*]. "Farsi turco" or, in its early modern English formulation, "to turn Turk," was a practice and topos that accompanied Christian Europe's dealings with the Ottoman Empire; "Turk" here is synonymous with "Muslim," and the threat is that of conversion to Islam.[33] The threat was real, and the practice common enough during the Ottoman Empire's heyday; historians claim that there were 300,000 "*rinnegati*" or "*renegadoes*" from 1500 to 1600, and several thousand in the eighteenth century.[34] Christians taken prisoners by corsairs and enslaved often found their conditions improved considerably if they converted (Giovanni Finati is a case in point). In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries "turning Turk" could also offer upward mobility (for example, the only unit of the Ottoman fleet to resist at Lepanto was commanded by a renegade peasant from Calabria, Ulug Alì, known in Italy as Occhialì).[35] The danger of capture had lessened by the early nineteenth century, but had not entirely disappeared. Perhaps more to the point, the fantasy of capture and its consequences lived on. As Franco Cardini notes, Mozart's 1782 *Abduction from the Seraglio* and Rossini's 1813 *l'Italiana in Algeri* (not to mention its mirror opposite, the 1814 *Un turco in Italia*) would not have come into

33 The final phrase – that he would rather turn Turk – is italicized in the 1841 edition each time it is repeated. That italicization not only emphasizes the exceptional nature of such a threat but, since italicization is almost exclusively reserved for Arabic words cited in the text, it also makes it seem as though N were already speaking Arabic, at the moment when he makes the threat to convert. (A non-Italian speaker might also be tempted to read it as an "Italic" apotropaic against the very possibility of converting to Islam, a way to contain and "Italicize" it, were it not for the fact that in Italian one refers to "italics" as *corsivo*, cursive.)

34 See Bartolomé Bennassar and Lucile Bennassar, *Les Chrétiens d'Allah: L'histoire extraordinaire des renégats XVI^e^–XVII^e^ siècles* (Paris: Perrin, 1989).

35 See Lucetta Scaraffia, *Rinnegati. Per una storia dell'identità occidentale* (Rome: Laterza, 1993), viii.

existence if the conditions of Christian prisoners in Muslim countries had not improved, and yet they also would not have been created if the risk of capture had not long been a European nightmare.[36]

In the case of Nizzoli's account, "turning Turk" could be a stratagem with a purely practical goal, for, by declaring himself "Turk," N would no longer be under the jurisdiction of the persecuting Sardinian consul, but rather under that of the local authorities, according to the system of capitulations. It was a practice that, in many cases, was simply pragmatic.[37] On the other hand, of course, conversion to Islam reverberated deeply among Europeans, whether Catholic or Protestant (albeit with a difference: as Daniel Vitkus reminds us, early modern English Protestant texts associated both the Catholic pope and the Ottoman sultan with Satan and the Antichrist, and Italians and Turks represented a similar racialized threat).[38] The threat to "turn Turk" was a mode of blasphemy, often pronounced as a sign of desperation and the equivalent of invoking a pact with the devil. The devil in this case was one with an empire: the Ottoman Empire, still associated with power, wealth, and fantasies of polygamy. Indeed, when the Pasha hears of the threat he demands to hear N out, and N declares that he prefers to embrace Islam rather than subordinate himself to the Sardinian Consul, "ed in così dire ne pronunciò la formola" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 342) [and in so saying, he pronounced the formula]. Nizzoli provides a moral to her story:

> Ed ecco come talvolta l'imprudenza e la cattiva direzione d'un magistrato può far perdere un uomo, come in questa circostanza fece lo sgraziato

36 Franco Cardini, *Europa e Islam. Storia di un malinteso* (Rome: Laterza, 1999), 247.

37 Indeed, Ersilio Michel recounts a similar episode that took place in the same year (1825) between the same Sardinian consul and one Giuseppe Marenco, who he says might have been associated with the arsenal. When threatened with arrest, Marenco "si pose sotto la protezione delle leggi e delle autorità locali, convertendosi all'islamismo." [by converting to Islam, he placed himself under the protection of the local laws and authorities] Michel, *Esuli italiani in Egitto*, 23.

38 See Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean 1570–1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). The topos and the phenomenon of "renegades" who abandoned their religion to embrace Islam has recently received attention from literary scholars of the early modern period in England, and from historians of the early modern Mediterranean, including relations between Venetians and the Ottomans. For the former, see Patricia Parker, "Preposterous Conversions: Turning Turk, and its 'Pauline' Rerighting," *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies* 2:1 (2002), 1–34; for the latter, see Eric Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

> N, che religione, patria e parenti abbandonò insanamente per impeto sconsigliato di disperazione! Io e mio marito non sapevamo più in che mondo fossimo in tutti quei giorni. (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 343)
>
> [And so it is that sometimes imprudence and the bad supervision of a magistrate can cause a man to be lost, as in this circumstance happened to the unfortunate N, who insanely abandoned religion, fatherland and family out of an ill-advised impulse of desperation! My husband and I no longer knew in what world we found ourselves in those days.]

All it takes is a single formula to lose family, country, and religion; a single click of the heels and, poof, there's no longer a place like home. The discourse of Christian conversion that has accompanied Italian travelers (and not only) from Marco Polo onward of course always contains within it a possibility of reversal, a possibility acknowledged in the topos of going native but disavowed or repressed in most narrative accounts.[39] I think it is not by chance that this moment of radical disorientation should be preceded by the remark, made in an earlier passage cited above, that the "Italian cause" is imaginary – that is to say that, in Cairo, as elsewhere, Italy has no national status equivalent to that of France and England. The political instability of home leads to a heightened volatility of identity abroad, one that allows for reversibilities to become visible.

A final instance of such a reversibility may be drawn from a scene within the harem itself. Nizzoli's description of her social interactions with the women (and, in one case, of what appears to be true friendship) normalizes rather than eroticizes the harem. In the domestic space of the harem Nizzoli

39 On the discourse of Christian conversion in travel writing, see especially Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*. Lucia Rostagno examines Inquisition documents concerning "renegades" who had "turned Turk" in *Mi faccio turco: esperienze ed immagini dell'Islam nell'Italia moderna* (Rome: L'Istituto per l'oriente C. A. Nallino, 1983). Given the context in which these documents are found – requests to be reconciled with the Catholic Church – it is not surprising that almost all of the accounts Rostagno uncovers in the period 1500–1700 represent the turn to Islam as the result of coercion, rather than as a true conversion. Occasionally more opportunistic reasons are given, such as the desire to eat meat whenever one likes or to take more than one wife, suggesting that fantasy was also at work. In addition, Robert C. Davis has recently speculated that the European association of Islamicate culture with male homoeroticism may also have inspired some Europeans to "turn Turk" for motives not merely mercenary. See Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*, 29.

would seem to re-enact, playfully, what in the case of the men had appeared as a threat. Admonished by the women for her immodest outfit during her first visit, she returns later always in Turkish dress: "parvemi d'essere una odalisca" [it seemed to me that I was an odalisque], she writes, and, upon her first return, she is greeted by the wife of the Abdin-Bey with open arms: "Oh sì che adesso state bene! esclamò; peccato che non siate turca anche nell'interno!" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 195, 197) ["'Oh yes, how fine you look now!' she exclaimed; 'what a shame that you're not a Turk on the inside, too!'"]. Nizzoli participates in their baths, their exfoliations, their endless smoking and coffee drinking, and, on one occasion, even by chance in their prayers: "Per un azzardo era collocata proprio verso il lato, dirimpetto a cui doveano voltarsi, cioè verso oriente. Sembrava perciò, quando esse si prostravano a terra, che io fossi l'oggetto della loro adorazione" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 223) [By chance I was placed right toward the side toward which they had to turn, that is toward the orient. Hence it seemed, when they prostrated themselves, that I was the object of their adoration]. Nizzoli here is placed not only in, but *as* the "orient." This is already a reversal of East and West, and Nizzoli's interpretation of the scene as one in which she herself is prayed to would seem to be an attempt to manage the threat such a reversal might represent. Here that threat is made evident by the reaction that follows:

> Confesso la mia puerilità, in quel momento mi veniva voglia di ridere, e feci motto di alzarmi onde non essere veduta, ma m'invitarono a rimanere. La preghiera durò circa un quarto d'ora; e fu più lunga del solito perchè era venerdì che è il loro giorno di festa. La pipa che continuai a tenere in bocca mi salvò dal non ridere. (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 223)
>
> [I confess my childishness, in that moment I wanted to laugh, and I made as though to get up so as not to be seen, but they asked me to stay. The prayer lasted about a quarter of an hour, and it was longer than usual because it was Friday, their holiday. The pipe that I continued to hold in my mouth saved me from laughing.]

Her suppressed giggle perhaps betrays an awareness that she might in fact participate in their prayers not only as their object but also as a subject, that the distance from being a "Turk" on the outside and becoming one "on the inside" might not be so very far after all. Holding the pipe in her mouth to suppress that laugh only accentuates the possibility, since it is emphasized as a defining practice of the harem women. But the final twist comes when

it turns out that the women have not been praying *to* her, but rather *for* her: "Terminata la preghiera mi dissero che anche quella volta avevano pregato per me, onde potessi abbracciare la vera religione" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 224) [When the prayer was over, they told me that once again they had prayed for me, that I might embrace the true religion]. This is perhaps the moment in the text when the Arabic-speaking, veiled Nizzoli is most lost as "donna italiana," and the possibility of conversion to Islam (or at least of "Levantinization") no longer seems alien.[40] If the leisure of the European woman is what allows her to learn Arabic (at least according to Cusani), it is also what might allow her to "turn Turk." It is not by chance, I think, that this is the last chapter to speak of the harem, and that Nizzoli should turn away from it, announcing the harem to be "boring and insipid."

But the identity "lost" is, I would argue, never fully recovered. By the time Nizzoli announces on the very last page that Milan has become her "seconda patria," we no longer know what the first one might have been, and the "concittadine" to whom she addresses the work in the introduction are, we discover, equally as likely to be her fellow inhabitants of Zante as those of Cairo or Milan. It seems particularly fitting that she should end up on the island of Zante: birthplace of the poet Ugo Foscolo and, before the treaty of Campoformio in 1797 (the great Napoleonic betrayal), a Venetian territory. The nationalizing address would have had particular resonance coming from Zante, which Chateaubriand, and Edgar Allan Poe after him, had immortalized as "Isola d'oro, Fior di Levante" [Golden Island, Flower of the Levant].[41] At once Italy in the Orient and the Orient in Italy, Zante stands as an apt figure for the crossing of imaginary geographies of Occident and Orient, North and South that characterize the detourism that constructs a national home for Amalia Nizzoli.

40 Srinivas Aravamudan adopts the term "levantinization" to refer to partial identifications with Turkish women on the part of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in *Tropicopolitans*, 159–89. Such identification has principally to do with understanding Turkish costume and the bathhouse (*hamam*) as facilitating women's agency, and does not go as far as imagining religious conversion.

41 See Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, ed. E. Malakis (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1946), I, 163. Cusani himself uses the phrase when he recounts how he came to meet Amalia Nizzoli, during a visit to Zante, "meritamente chiamata Fior di Levante" (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, ix).

CHAPTER TWO

Hygiene in the Harem: The Orientalism of Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso

Some 40 years after Amalia Nizzoli traveled to Egypt, another Italian woman, Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, offered to unlock the "hermetically closed" harem she had visited during her travels from Anatolia to Jerusalem. A patriot and princess, exceptional woman and anti-emancipationist feminist, Belgiojoso was also a resident in Ottoman lands. But, whereas Nizzoli's detour through the Orient was necessary to "Europeanize" her and make possible her subsequent "Italianization," Belgiojoso's detour follows a trajectory in which the making of the Italian nation, travel to Ottoman-ruled lands, and entry into the harem line up rather differently. An active proponent of Italian Unification, Belgiojoso sought political exile in the 1830s in order to escape retribution from the Austrian authorities; she chose France, already in many senses her intellectual and cultural "home" as a Lombard aristocrat.[1] After the failure of the revolutions of 1848 in Milan and Venice, and of 1849 in Rome, she once again sought exile. But by then deeply disappointed by the role of the French in squelching the Roman republic, during which she played an active role as director of military ambulances, she left Europe entirely to

1 A number of biographies have been written about Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso. These include A. Augustin Thierry, *La princesse Belgiojoso: Une heroïne romantique* (Paris: Plon, 1926), largely made up of Belgiojoso's correspondence with his grandfather, also named Augustin Thierry; Aldobrandino Malvezzi's three volume *La principessa Cristina di Belgiojoso* (Milan: Treves, 1936), which draws extensively on her correspondence and defends her gallantly against detractors; Luigi Severgnini, *La principessa di Belgiojoso: Vita e opera* (Milan: Virgilio, 1973), a popularizing volume; and Beth Archer Brombert, *Cristina Belgiojoso: Portraits of a Princess* (New York: Knopf, 1977), which also draws extensively on her correspondence and is the most exhaustive and measured biography to date. More recently, a children's book *Cristina Belgiojoso: Una principessa italiana* (Trieste: Edizioni EL, 2002) by Angela Nanetti portrays her as a great, forgotten patriot.

set up residence in Anatolia from 1850 to 1855. Her detour through France was cultural and political, as well as linguistic; with the exception of her 1866 *Della presente condizione delle donne e del loro avvenire* [Of the Present Condition of Women and of Their Future] and her 1868 *Osservazioni sullo stato attuale dell'Italia e sul suo avvenire* [Remarks on the Present State of Italy and its Future], Belgiojoso wrote her major works in French, including the majority of the texts that will be of interest to us here. These recount, in three different genres, a second detour through the Ottoman empire: the travel narrative *La vie intime et la vie nomade en Orient* [Intimate Life and Nomadic Life in the Orient], first published in *La revue des deux mondes* in 1855), her epistolary collection, *Souvenirs dans l'exil* [Memories in Exile], written en route to taking up residence in Anatolia in 1850, and her short stories gathered together as *Scènes de la vie turque* [Scenes of Turkish Life], written after her return to Italy and originally published in the Parisian periodical *La revue des deux mondes* in 1858.[2] The second detour is thus recounted through the first; French, and French Orientalism, are the home from which she departs and to which she writes back, all the while in exile from her native Italy.[3] Indeed, it is worth noting, as does Aamir R. Mufti, that Paris was "already by the 1820s and for much of the nineteenth century, the center of European Orientalism."[4]

2 *La vie intime* has been translated into Italian as *Vita intima e vita nomade in Oriente* by Olimpia Antoninetti (Como-Pavia: Ibis, 1993). Two of the tales from *Scènes de la vie turque* have recently been translated into Italian by Flavia Milanese: *Un principe curdo*, ed. Mirella Scriboni (Ferrara: Luciana Tufani Editrice, 1998), and *Emina*, ed. Mirella Scriboni (Ferrara: Luciana Tufani Editrice, 1997). On the tales, see Cristina Giorcelli, "L'Orientalismo di Cristina di Belgiojoso: *Scènes de la vie turque*," in *Cristina di Belgiojoso. Politica e cultura nell'Europa dell'ottocento*, ed. Ginevra Conti Odorisio, Cristina Giorcelli, and Giuseppe Monsagrati (Casoria: Editore Loffredo, 2010), 101–20.

3 This itinerary (Italy, France, "the Orient") is itself a reshuffling of a pattern set by British and French travelers, for whom Italy is sometimes a stop on the way to the Orient or is itself folded into the Orient, whether through metaphor, imaginative geography, or the real historical presence of Italians and their language in the Levant.

4 Mufti makes this observation within the context of his critique of the lack of attention, in current discusions of "world literature," to the role that Orientalism plays in the genealogy of world literature, and specifically within the context of his critique of Pascale Casanova's *World Republic of Letters*. The problem, in Mufti's view, is not that Casanova's view is too "Paris-centric," but rather that it overlooks the importance of Paris as the center of European Orientalism. See Mufti, *Forget English!*, 97.

Penetration and Reform

Like Nizzoli, Belgiojoso features the trope of "penetrating the harem" as the main attraction in the opening lines of her travel narrative, but, whereas Nizzoli deployed it as part of a rhetoric of modesty, the Princess Trivulzio di Belgiojoso is rather more at home with a rhetoric of privilege:

> Il est vrai que j'étais mieux placée que la plupart des voyageurs pour connaître tout un côté fort important de la société musulmane, – le côté domestique, celui où domine la femme. Le harem, ce sanctuaire mahométan, hermétiquement fermé à tous les hommes, m'était ouvert. J'y pouvais pénétrer librement; je pouvais converser avec ces êtres mystérieux que le Franc n'aperçoit que voilés, interroger quelques-unes de ces âmes qui jamais ne s'épanchent, et les provoquer à des confidences précieuses sur tout un monde inconnu de passions et de malheurs. Les récits des voyageurs, incomplets en ce qui touche la civilisation musulmane, le sont bien souvent d'ailleurs en ce qui touche la nature et l'aspect matériel des lieux. Que de mots ils emploient sans les expliquer, et qui, dans ce qu'on pourrait appeler la *langue européene*, ont une signification toute différente de celle qui leur appartient quand on les appliquer à des usages orientaux![5]
>
> [It is true that I was better placed than most travelers to know an entire and very important side of Muslim society – the domestic side, where women reign. The harem, this Muhammadan sanctuary, hermetically sealed to all men, was open to me. I could penetrate it freely; I could converse with these mysterious beings that the Frank only perceives as veiled, I could interrogate some of these souls who never unburden themselves, and provoke them to precious confidences about an entire unknown world of passions and pains. Travelers' accounts, incomplete in matters of Muslim civilization, are even more so when it comes to the nature and material aspect of places. How many words they employ without explaining them, and which, in what one could call the

5 Mme la Princesse de Belgiojoso, *Asie mineure et Syrie: Souvenirs de voyages* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1858), 2. In addition to *La vie intime et la vie nomade*, this edition also includes a "Retour," an account of the return from Jerusalem to her residence in Anatolia.

> *European tongue*, have an entirely different meaning from that which belongs to them when one applies them to Oriental usages!][6]

The cultivated Belgiojoso – author of a four-volume work on Catholic dogma, translator of Vico's *New Science* into French, friend of Lizst, Heine, de Musset, Tommaseo, Madame Récamier, Thierry, and numerous other artists and intellectuals who frequented her Parisian salon in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré – is no foreigner to Orientalist discourse; rather, she puts it on display ("ces êtres mystérieux que le Franc n'aperçoit que voilés"), only to take her distance from it, labeling it a "European tongue" incommensurable with the reality of "oriental customs" and "the material aspect of places."[7] Belgiojoso is clearly instrumentalizing the trope of the penetration of the harem; she will find no mystery at all in what, for her, will be its ridiculously decked out, entirely stupid, inhabitants; they merely provide an opening onto the more interesting gap between textual mediation and experience. She is, of course, not alone in noting a gap between textual mediation and experience; the "belated" travelers studied by Ali Behdad similarly note such a disjunction, and are themselves split by it, their experience of the real riven and made dream-like by their reading. But whereas for a contemporary "belated" traveler such as Gérard de Nerval the gap between textual mediation and experience creates a nostalgic desire for a lost Orient whose mystery remains intact in (what is felt to be) its historical inaccessibility, for Belgiojoso the gap opens up an opportunity to establish her own authority as the doggedly disappointed, determinedly enlightened traveler, immune to the seductions of poetic mediation and split in and by her gendering. Reason is her beacon and calling card and, with few exceptions, the poetic and picturesque hold no appeal for her. So, for example, toward the end of her voyage out, she will be thankful to have arrived in Nazareth by night, not because it affords her a moonlit view like those of which her contemporary

6 All translations are my own. I have consulted the English translation, *Oriental Harems and Scenery, Translated from the French of the Princess Belgioioso* (New York: Carleton, 1862).

7 According to Jean-Yves Frétigné, the Faubourg Saint-Honoré was the neighborhood in which the most cosmopolitan, most liberal salons were located during the July Monarchy (1830–1848), the golden age of Parisian salons. See Jean-Yves Frétigné, "Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso et la intelligentsia française libérale," in *Cristina di Belgiojoso. Politica e cultura nell'Europa dell'ottocento*, ed. Ginevra Conti Odorisio, Cristina Giorcelli, and Giuseppe Monsagrati (Casoria: Editore Loffredo, 2010), 167–84.

Miss Harriet Martineau is so fond but rather because it delays the inevitable letdown that the light of day will bring.[8]

> J'avais ainsi retardé une épreuve pénible et singulière, – dont j'ai déjà parlé, – l'impuissance de tirer de la vue réelle des lieux célèbres les émotions que m'en procure en quelque sorte la vue intérieure et anticipée. C'était une déception de ce genre que j'avais éprouvée à Athènes et à Rome. Je me souviens encore d'avais envié dans la plaine de Marathon l'émotion que le souvenir de Thémistocle éveilla chez un de mes compagnons de voyage. Cet homme, lettré et intelligent, avait pourtant l'esprit plus positif que poétique. Je vis une larme rouler sur ses joues, et pour moi, je l'avoue à ma honte, tout ce que je pus noter en visitant Marathon, c'est qu'il faisait chaud ce jour-là. (*Asie mineure*, 188)

> [I had thus delayed a singular and painful experience, of which I have already spoken: the inability to draw from the real view of famous places the emotions that I derived in some way from the internal and anticipated view. I had experienced a deception of this sort in Athens and in Rome. I still remember having envied the emotion that the memory of Themistocles had awakened in one of my traveling companions on the plain of Marathon. This man, learned and intelligent as he was,

8 The comparison presents itself as particularly apt, given that Martineau is one of the few travel writers of whom Belgiojoso makes mention in *Asie mineure*. In addition to practical reasons for traveling by night, attributable to the climate, there was also an aesthetic gain: as is typical of colonial rhetoric, unpopulated landscapes are more easily transformed into discursive postcards, of the following sort: "The Lybian range shone distinctly yellow by moonlight. I thought I had never heard of colour by moonlight before; and I was sure I had never seen it. Now my eyes feasted on it night by night. The effect of palm clumps standing up before these yellow backgrounds, which are themselves bounded by a line of purple hills, with silver stars hanging above them, and mysterious heavenly lights gushing up from behind all, exceeds in rich softness any colouring that sunshine can show." See Harriet Martineau, *Eastern Life: Present and Past* (London: Edward Moxon, 1848), 124–25. The "colors" that Martineau saw during day time were of a rather different sort. Martineau's palette is a racializing one, in which "blacks" are inserted into "scenes" for "contrast," as in the following passage: "From my point of observation, I had seen that several weirs were constructed among the rapids, where a few blackies were busy, – some leaning over from the rocks, and others up to their shoulders in the stream. Their dusky figures contrasted finely with the glittering waters; and it was a truly savage African scene" (112). See also Dobie, *Foreign Bodies*, for a discussion of racialization in the service of "contrast" in visual representations.

> nevertheless had a spirit more positive than poetic. I saw a tear roll down his cheeks while I, I confess to my shame, all I could note upon visiting Marathon, was that it was hot that day.]

Here textual mediation – source of internal view and expectations, repository of the memory of Themistocles – does its emotional work on the man of letters, but Belgiojoso herself remains dry-eyed (and, we suppose, hot). The example itself can hardly be innocent: the Battle of Marathon, site of a victory of the Greeks over the Persians, carries considerable ideological weight in partisan histories that celebrate it as a crucial triumph of the West over the East. For Belgiojoso to remain unmoved, then, is to authorize her as even less "poétique" and more "positif" than her male companion, most especially in matters where East meets West.

In her account of the harem, in fact, there will be no "precious confidences," no "mysterious beings," and even less will passions be unleashed, for Belgiojoso goes on to unveil an Orient that is the locus not of the exotic and erotic but of inevitable and repeated disappointments. Principal among these disappointments, at least for "le Franc" invoked above, is the harem itself:

> Je détruis peut-être quelques illusions en parlant avec aussi peu de respect des harems. Nous avons lu des descriptions dans *Les Milles et une Nuits* et autres contes orientaux; on nous a dit que ses lieux sont le séjours de la beauté et des amours: nous sommes autorisés à croire que les descriptions écrites, quoique exagérées et embellies, sont pourtant fondées sur la réalité, et que c'est dans ces mystérieuses retraites que l'on doit trouver rassemblées toutes les merveilles du luxe, de l'art, de la magnificence et de la volupté. Que nous voilà loin de la verité! (*Asie mineure*, 15–16)

> [In speaking with so little respect of harems, I will perhaps destroy some illusions. We have read the descriptions in *The Thousand and One Nights* and other Oriental tales; we have been told that these places are the site of beauty and loves; we are authorized to believe that the written descriptions, although exaggerated and embellished, are nevertheless founded on reality, and that it is in these mysterious portraits that one should find gathered together all the marvels of luxury, of art, of magnificence and voluptuousness. How far from the truth we are!]

A reference to the *Thousand and One Nights* is almost obligatory in nineteenth-century accounts, evoking a community of readers and a

by-then-commonplace Orientalism.[9] A more striking intertext is evoked by the phrase "Du luxe, de l'art … de la volupté'; the cultivated French reader of today cannot but find in them an echo of the "luxe, calme, et volupté" that characterize "la splendeur orientale" in Baudelaire's poem "Invitation au voyage." A quick glance at chronology, however, reveals that Belgiojoso is not echoing Baudelaire so much as citing the very same Orientalist discourse that Baudelaire mobilizes to far less critical ends. *Les fleurs du mal* is in fact published as a volume two years after *La vie intime et la vie nomade en Orient*. By a striking coincidence, however, a selection from *Les fleurs* appears in the very same issue of the *Revue des deux mondes* in which Chapter III of Belgiojoso's narrative, "Le touriste européen dans l'Orient Arabe," is published.[10] Viewed within the context of the 1855 *Revue*, Baudelaire and Belgiojoso look to be contemporary wielders of a common idiom, each manipulating the "langue européene" to rather different ends. Belgiojoso writes both with and against that idiom.[11] Thus, on the one hand, Belgiojoso's narrative seems to adhere closely to a generic template of "scènes de la vie" (the 1855 volume of the *Revue* alone contains "Scènes de la vie italienne," "Scènes de la vie et de la littérature américaine," "Scènes et récits des Alpes," and "Scènes et souvenirs de la vie politique et militaire en Orient;" the line-up of geographical locations is not without interest, all lying at or beyond the periphery of the French hexagon, and with the suggestion that Oriental, American, and Italian life might be equally exotic from that perspective). On the other hand, Belgiojoso aims not only to supplement but to debunk Orientalist discourse, and could thus be said to produce a corrective counter-discourse that has been labeled a "realist" Orientalism.[12] Meyda Yeğenoğlu has argued compellingly that such a counter-discourse should not be understood as a disruption of Orientalism, not a taking exception to it, but rather as built into Orientalism itself.[13]

9 Published in installments from 1704 to 1717, the *Milles et une nuit* has recently been characterized by Srinivas Aravamudan as a "transcreation" rather than a translation, given that many of the tales have no known originals in Arabic. For a stimulating discussion of the transcultural role played by *The Arabian Nights*, see Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism*, 50–38.

10 Vol. 10 (Avril, Mai, Juin) 1855 of *La revue des deux mondes* contains "Le touriste européen dans l'Orient Arabe," 60–89 and Baudelaire, "Les Fleurs du mal," 1079–1093.

11 As Behdad remarks, "writing *through* the intertext always involves a gesture of writing against it." Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, 106.

12 On counter-discourses produced by women travelers, see Lowe, *Critical Terrains* and Melman, *Women's Orients*.

13 See Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies*, 68–94.

Belgiogioso takes yet another step in this direction; she derives her own authority by widening the gap between textual mediation and experience and by usurping the authority of the mediating texts. It is for this reason that the harem is useful to her; as the one place that Orientalist texts already authorize her to visit "as a woman," it is also the place in which she can most legitimately usurp that authority and assert her own. She takes positive delight in "destroying illusions" ("Je détruis peut-être quelques illusions … ") and takes up the position of the enlightened reformer. As in her arrival at Nazareth, it is only during an epistemological "night" that such illusions can be sustained. Indeed, Belgiojoso comes close to closing the gap between experience and textual mediation only when the mediating text is a sacred one.

For, as we discover much later in the narrative, Belgiojoso's voyage is also a pilgrimage, a trip whose immediate motivation is the first communion of her daughter, Marie, and whose destination is Jerusalem. Unlike her predecessor Chateaubriand, who gave top billing to the sacred destination of his voyage in the title of his 1811 travel narrative, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, Belgiojoso subordinates the immediate, sacred motivations of her voyage to its epistemological and reformist ones. And unlike Nizzoli, who addressed her account to her daughter in yet another gesture of feminine modesty, Belgiojoso refers only rarely to the fact that her daughter traveled in her company, along with an unspecified number of servants, also only rarely acknowledged.[14] In this respect, in fact, she participates in what Deborah Cherry has aptly called an "hallucination of aloneness," a fantasy sustained in nineteenth-century travel writing by consistently overlooking the native or Western guides and translators who made such voyages possible in the first place.[15] It is as though the Holy Lands were merely

14 Beth Archer Brombert, who studied Belgiojoso's correspondence in detail in researching *Cristina Belgiojoso: Portraits of a Princess*, reports that she was accompanied by Marie, the English governess Mrs. Parker, and a "small retinue" led by the son of the Turk from whom she had purchased her farm (205). Absence of reference to her daughter may have been overdetermined by the fact that, at this point in time, Marie had not yet been legitimated. Her birth had not been recorded under either name, Belgiojoso or Trivulzio, and she thus had no inheritance rights in regard to either family (Brombert, *Cristina Belgiojoso*, 136); according to Brombert, part of Belgiojoso's mission in Turkey was to find a property that she could leave to her daughter.

15 See Deborah Cherry, "Earth into World, Land into Landscape: The 'Worlding' of Algeria in Nineteenth-Century British Feminism," in Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, eds., *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 112.

the alibi that allowed Belgiojoso to indulge in ethnographic reflections and reformist musings. But, once in the Holy Land, even the enlightened Belgiojoso must grapple with the mediating sacred texts. The dry-eyed princess finds herself moved at the sight of the sea of Galilee: in a "strange tumult" she feels her throat contract and her eyes fill with tears, "come si j'avais retrouvé une patrie plus ancienne que celle d'où j'étais exilée (194) [as though I had re-found a homeland older than the one from which I had been exiled.] It is significant, I think, that the sacred homeland is evoked in relation to the political one, and her sacred emotion thereby tinged with civic longing. "Chose étrange," she remarks, in the second use of "strange" in as many sentences. Strange for her not be a stranger, but stranger still for her to be overcome by emotion. A few pages later, as she is about to enter the gardens of Solomon, it seems the gap between mediating text and experience is also about to be overcome:

> Nous allons aux jardins de Salomon. On aime a croire que le Cantique des Cantiques a été inspiré par ces frais ombrages [...] Allais-je voir apparaître le roi et la Sunamite au milieu de ce féerique paysage? C'est ce que j'étais presque tenté de croire, quand un spectacle fort inattendu vint dissiper les visions que je cherchais è evoquer: j'étais au milieu d'une *party* anglaise. Une de ces colonies britanniques qu'on recontre sur tous les points du monde avait pris possession, pour la saison d'été, des jardins de Salomon; elle les avait loué comme on loue une maison de campagne à Saint Cloud, ou une *villa* à Capo-di-Monte. (205–06)
>
> [We are going to Solomon's gardens. One would like to think that the Song of Songs was inspired by these cool shadows ... . Was I going to see the King and the Shunamite amidst this fairy-like landscape? I was almost tempted to believe so, when a highly unexpected spectacle dispelled the visions that I was trying to evoke: I was in the midst of an English *party* (IN ENGLISH IN THE TEXT). One of those British colonies that one finds at all points of the world had taken possession, for the summer season, of Solomon's gardens. They had rented them, just as one rents a country house at Saint Cloud, or a *villa* (IN ITALIAN IN THE TEXT) at Capodimonte.]

The closing of the gap is interrupted by those English, handily appearing just in the nick of time to save Belgiojoso from misting over and giving in to a superimposition of textual mediation and experience. Imperialists in tourism

as in all else, she seems to imply, the British *party* interrupts her French prose as well, and provides an opportunity for Belgiojoso to insert one of several nods in the text to her own national belonging, and to her Italian homeland as equally available to such touristic imperialism.

But if Orientalist discourse is debunked, it is not discarded but, rather, rerouted. By designating the European visitor as "le Franc" in the opening passage, she already aligns herself discursively with those who observe her and who, we learn a few pages later, refer to her similarly: "Une dame franque chassée de son pays par la guerre et venant passer son exil en Turquie, – c'est ainsi que la rumeur publique me désignait aux propriétaires fonciers des environs de Constantinople" (10) [A Frankish lady chased from her own country by the war and come to spend her exile in Turkey: thus public rumor designated me to the landowners in the environs of Constantinople]. Belgiojoso adopts as self-representation the "public rumor" that designates her a "Frankish lady," fashioning herself her as the exotic, exiled heroine of her own text.[16] It is as though the narrator's gaze had been rerouted, and the exoticism formerly attributed to the occupants of the harem now displaced onto the figure of the upper-class European woman.

Such a refashioning is consistent with the way in which dominant class and racialization often trump subordinate gender in the discourse of European women's travel to the East, as feminist critics have noted. Describing herself as "mieux placée," Belgiojoso dutifully implies that her privilege is one of gender – that is to say that, "as a woman," she was able to enter the harem. Yet her placement in her own narrative, and in the places and spaces it represents, suggests a more complicated scenario in which her gendered identity is itself riven. If her femininity guarantees her access to the harem, her class-belonging and identity as a Frank secure her exemption from its constraints. From the very beginning of her voyage she takes pains to avoid being lodged in the harems of her various hosts, or, as she puts it, to be "condamnée à habiter le harem" (93) [condemned to live in the harem]. In this respect, she represents herself as taking up the position of the "exceptional woman," for whom mobility implies freedom from gender norms and whose exceptionality requires a disidentification with other women – in this case, with the inhabitants of the Oriental harems. There is no place here for the rhetoric of identification that Lisa Lowe has argued characterized Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Embassy Letters* of a century and a half earlier. Within

16 For a brief and disapproving discussion of Belgiojoso's self-fashioning in her own life, see Thierry's biography *La princesse Belgiojoso*.

Belgiojoso's narrative, her affinities and placement thus seem to align her with the highly placed Muslim men: it is worthy of note that the addressees of the public rumor cited above are explicitly the landowners of the region, whose number she portrays herself as having recently joined. In this respect, her travelogue contributes to the figuration of her as the "virile woman," or, as her contemporary Victor Cousin put it, and as her biographers are fond of citing, "*Foemina sexu, ingenio vir*" [of female sex, of male genius].[17] On the one hand, of course, this topos has long served the anti-feminist purpose of gendering the intellect as exclusively male. On the other, it arises here as a function of her placement within the epistemological structure of Orientalism and as a result of her movement within the spaces of her narrative: not only is the position of Orientalist knower gendered as male in relation to a feminized Orient, but Belgiojoso's insistence on her own mobility in relation to gendered spaces – as she moves in and out of the harem, or crosses dangerous terrain at the head of men in her employ – recalls the emplotment of those mythical narratives in which maleness and movement are strictly allied.[18]

In Belgiojoso's case, this cross-gender identification remains a structural one, and never takes on the thematic, visually seductive form of cross-gender cross-cultural cross-dressing; it will fall to later travelers, such as Isabelle Eberhardt, to take up this possibility.[19] Rather, what takes place in and through her split gendering is a consolidation of class-belonging. On the second day of her voyage she is offered hospitality by the mufti of Cerkes, who wins her respect because he professes "une répugnance de bon goût pour le vacarme, le désordre, et la malpropreté du harem" (15) [a tasteful repugnance for the hubbub, the disorder and filthiness of the harem]:

> Le brave homme comprit que si une longue habitude n'avait pu le réconcilier avec les inconvénients du harem, ce devait être encore bien pis pour moi, nouvellement débarquée de cette terre d'enchantements et de raffinements qu'on nomme le *Franquistan*. Aussi me déclara-t-il

17 See, for example, Thierry, *La princesse Belgiojoso*, 4: "'*Femina sexu, ingenio vir*,' la qualifie Victor Cousin … . Hardie, entreprenante, tout en elle est viril, à travers un corps presque immatérial: l'esprit, le caractère, même le coeur."

18 On the gendering of mythical emplotment, see Teresa de Lauretis's chapter "Desire in Narrative," in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 103–57. On women's travel and the gendering of spaces, see Melman, *Women's Orients*, 17.

19 On Isabelle Eberbardt's cross-cultural cross-dressing, see Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, 113–32.

> tout d'abord qu'il ne me relèguerait pas dans ce lieu de ténèbres et de confusion, infect et enfumé, qu'on nomme le *harem*, et qu'il me cédait son propre appartement. (*Asie mineure*, 15)
>
> [The good man understood that if long habit had not succeeded in reconciling him to the inconveniences of the harem, it must be even worse for me, newly arrived from that land of enchantments and refinements that goes by the name of *Frankistan*. He declared to me right away that he would not relegate me to this place of darkness and confusion, infected and smoky, that goes by the name of the *harem*, and that he would cede to me his own apartment.]

Lodged in the mufti's own quarters, Belgiojoso attributes to him a kind of reverse Orientalism that we might call "Frankistanism"; for the mufti, she imagines, it is Europe rather than the Orient that is the land of enchantments and refinements, and the harem merely a place of discomfort. Frankistanist as he may be, the mufti is also imagined as sharing a class identity consolidated by the "good taste" that defines and manifests itself in a revulsion toward "filth." In the harem, as Belgiojoso describes it, bad housekeeping takes the place of Oriental splendor, and she recoils in hygienic horror:

> Imaginez des murs noircis et crevassés, des plafonds en bois fendus par places et recouverts de poussière et de toiles d'araignées, des sophas déchirés et gras, des portières en lambeaux, des traces de chandelle e d'huile partout. Lorsque j'entrais pour la première fois, j'en étais choquée; mais les maîtresses de la maison ne s'en apercevaient pas. Leur personne et à l'avenant. (16)
>
> [Imagine blackened and cracked walls, wooden ceilings split open in places and covered with dust and spider webs, torn and greasy sofas, door-curtains in shreds, and traces of candle wax and oil everywhere. When I entered for the first time, I was shocked, but the mistresses of the house took no note of it. Their persons are in keeping with the place.]

The harems she observes are dusty and dirty, full of grease and grime, and their inhabitants equally unkempt.[20] Belgiojoso goes on to note examples

20 The passage cited above earns Belgiojoso a single mention in Yeazell's *Harems of the Mind*, 205.

of other forms of untidiness, including what (in a kind of anti *éloge du maquillage*, to return for a moment to a Baudelairean register) she and many other Europeans routinely describe as excessive make-up (due, Belgiojoso explains, to the fact that there are few mirrors in the harem, and the women, rivals all, rely upon each other for advice, with grotesque results).[21] But from inside the harem the result of enclosure (and the lack to be found therein) is rather different from the one imagined by male Orientalists. Belgiojoso bemoans a lack of air circulation: "Ce qui manque complétement dans des appartements, c'est l'air; mais ces dames sont loin de s'en plaindre" (18) [What is entirely lacking in these apartments, is air; but these ladies are far from lamenting it]. She elaborates upon this lament later in the text, when she enters another, better appointed, harem:

> On me fit passer dans l'une des habitations qui entourent le jardin, et où toutes les femme des derviches se tenaient rassemblées pour me recevoir et me faire les honneurs du lieu. Il y en avait une trentaine entassées dans une petite pièce *hermétiquement fermée*, assez proprement meublée, et

21 Rivalry among the harem women is a principal theme of her Oriental tales. One aspect of this particular toilette is frequently singled out for attention: eyebrows penciled in as a single curving arch, from one temple to another and sometimes in a single straight line. Nizzoli herself comments upon them in her description of the wife of the Defterdar-Bey: "Aveva due bellissimi occhi, e, al dire degli arabi, somiglianti a quelli delle gazelle, ma le sopracciglia troppo tinte di nero, e dipinte in guisa di punta che scendeva quasi fino alla metà del naso, davano alla fisionomia un non so che di severo" [She had two very beautiful eyes, and, as the Arabs say, they resembled those of a gazelle, but the eyebrows too dyed black, and painted like a point that went almost halfway down the nose, gave her physiognomy an indefinable severity] (Nizzoli, *Memorie*, 179). Edmondo De Amicis's travel narrative *Constantinopoli* channels "più d'una viaggiatrice europea" (176) [more than one female European traveler] in his chapter on "le Turche": "É difficile definire la bellezza della donna turca. Posso dire che quando ci penso vedo un viso bianchissimo, due occhi neri, una bocca purpurea e un'espressione di dolcezza. Quasi tutte però sono dipinte. S'imbianchano il viso con pasta di mandorle e di gelsomino, s'ingrandiscono le sopracciglia con inchiostro di china, si tingono le palpebre, si'infarinano il collo, si fanno un cerchio nero intorno agli occhi, si mettono dei nei sulle guancie." [It is difficult to define the beauty of the Turkish woman. I can say that, when I think of her, I see a very white face, two black eyes, a purple mouth and a sweet expression. Almost all, however, are made up. They whiten their faces with a paste of almond and jasmine, they enlarge their eyebrows with China ink, they dye their eyelids, powder their necks, make a black circle around their eyes, and put beauty marks on their cheeks]. Edmondo De Amicis, *Constantinopoli* (1877) (reprint Milan: Touring Editore, 1997), 159.

> tellement chauffée par un poêle en fonte, que je me serais évanouie, si l'une de ces dames n'avait eu l'extrême bonté de casser un carreau (de papier) pour me donner de l'air. Dans ce climat si chaud, on ne craint rien tant que le froid, et l'on prend des soins inouïs pour s'en garantir, même dans les moments où de pauvres Européens tels que nous ne sont préoccupés que du danger de mourir de chaleur. Ainsi, pendant les mois les plus brûlants de l'été, vous voyez les Asiatiques enveloppés de pelisses en drap doublées de fourrures et groupés autour d'un feu flamboyant, tandis que les femmes emploient toutes les ressources de leur esprit à empêcher l'air extérieur de *pénétrer* dans leur maison. (32–33)
>
> [They had me pass into one of the habitations that surrounded the garden, in which all the dervishes' wives were gathered to receive me and do me the honors of the place. There were about thirty of them bunched together in a small, *hermetically closed* room, furnished appropriately enough, and so overheated by a cast-iron stove, that I would have fainted had one of those ladies not had the extreme kindness to break open a window (of paper) to give me some air. In such a hot country, nothing is more feared than the cold, and unheard of cares are taken to defend against it, even in moments when poor Europeans like us are concerned only about the danger of dying from the heat. Thus, during the hottest summer months, you see Asians enveloped in cloth capes lined with fur, huddled around a roaring fire, while the women employ all their resources to prevent the outside air from *penetrating* into their houses.]

Writing from within the harem itself, Belgiojoso refashions the rhetoric of "penetrating the harem" in the Orientalist tradition. In her opening lines she had adhered to that rhetoric, defining the harem as "ce sanctuaire mahométan, hermétiquement fermé à tous les hommes" (2) [this Muhammadan sanctuary, hermetically closed to all men]. But here the harem is "hermetically closed" not to the European male gaze but to the hygienic standards upheld by the European woman, and the threatened "penetration" opens the window not to sexual relations but to "outside air," whence come projects of social reform and hygiene.[22] Belgiojoso is herself explicitly the proponent of such reforms, both in Anatolia and at home in

22 I am grateful to Rhiannon Noel Welch for bringing this passage and its implications to my attention.

Italy; her transgression is a social rather than sexual one. And, as we have come to expect with women's travel narratives, discursive transgression is accompanied by a conciliatory display of femininity: in this case, the image of Belgiojoso as the upper-class woman on the verge of fainting away, as if in an overheated drawing room.

Inside this "place of darkness and confusion," Belgiojoso finds an even more repulsive kind of dirt:

> La multitude d'enfants et de servants, surtout de négresses, qui peuplent les harems, et le pied d'égalité sur lequel vivent maîtresses et suivants, sont aussi des causes aggravantes de la malpropreté générale. Je ne parlerai pas des enfants, chacun connaît leurs moeurs et leur coutumes; mais représentons-nous un instant ce que deviendraient nos jolis ameublements d'Europe, si nos cuisinières, nos femmes de peine, venaient se reposer de leurs travaux sur nos causeuses et nos fauteuils, les pieds sur nos tapis et le dos contre nos tentures. (17)
>
> [The multitude of children and servants, especially of negresses, who people the harems, and the equal footing upon which mistresses and attendants live, are also among the aggravating causes of general filthiness. I will not speak of the children, everyone knows their morals and habits; but just imagine for a moment what would happen to our pretty European furniture if our cooks, our serving maids, came to rest from their labors on our loveseats and armchairs, their feet on our rugs and their backs against our drapes.]

A confusion of classes and races emerges as the root of the general filthiness and impropriety in the harem, and the phantasm of its European equivalent takes shape as the true source of repulsion for Belgiojoso. The bodies that she fantasizes are not those of seductive odalisques, but rather those of one's very own servants – just imagine them resting their feet upon "our" rugs, their backs against "our" drapes! That the "filth" in question is a figural one that names a relation, rather than a literal one that names a substance that might be washed away, is reinforced by the fact that, in *La vie intime*, Belgiojoso does not provide a description of the *hamam*, the public baths that were every bit as obligatory a topos in traveler's accounts as the harem itself, beginning with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose description inspired Ingres' *Le bain turc*. Nizzoli herself provided a lengthy and ultimately disapproving one in which she joined the bathers

in what she calls their "fregagioni," our modern-day exfoliations.[23] Yet it makes ideological sense not only that Belgiojoso's own sense of bourgeois respectability might prohibit such an account but that the sort of cleanliness the *hamam* would provide would be of little account; indeed, insofar as the baths brought all the bodies, now naked, of the harem into proximity, they would offer simply another instance of the filthiness of transgressive class relations.

If the possibility of "turning Turk" marked the moment when the world came undone for Nizzoli, for Belgiojoso that moment lies in the specter of class mobility and its fantasized consequences. In fact, Belgiojoso will later describe conversion as a burgeoning business in the Levant; "turning Turk" is more akin to turning tricks, with financial rewards given out by Protestant missionaries to those willing to sell out on their own faith, countered by unending hospitality offered by Muslims to those willing to embrace Islam. Characteristically, Belgiojoso is repulsed but not scandalized by such meretricious behavior, no doubt in part because the participants are said to be Jews, and not good Catholics like herself. And even when the *rinnegati* are Catholics, such as those she encounters in Damascus, she is more disapproving than threatened by what she understands to be the sacrifice of reason, and the one true because rational faith, to commercial interest. What is threatened for Belgiojoso instead is the full range of the "proper" (propreté, but also, taking some etymological liberty, propriété): cleanliness, hygiene, propriety, property. Improper class relations will soil "our pretty European furnishings," "our" loveseats and "our" armchairs, "our" rugs and "our" drapes. Seven possessive first-person plural adjectives in a single sentence brand servants and furniture alike as "our" property. The de-eroticized harem is thus home to a physicality different from that suggested by the original metaphor of "penetration"; the promise of transgressive sexual relations is replaced by the threat of transgressive class relations, in which bodies and property come into illicit contact. The "bad air" Belgiojoso so assiduously avoids begins to seem to have more than a little to do with the "pied d'égalité" then "in the air" in European political discourse. Here Belgiojoso's politics back home and an enduring tradition of European writing about the Ottoman empire collude and collide.

23 On descriptions of the *hamam* in Victorian women's accounts, see Melman, *Women's Orients*, 131–36.

Mobile Hierarchies

At this juncture it is important to remember that the Ottoman harem, and Ottoman social organization more generally, have been a particularly fertile site for the cultivation of Western concerns and fantasies about proper and improper class relations and hierarchies. In travelers' accounts of Ottoman society, relations among classes, races, and ethnicities appear to be at once rigidly structured, strictly hierarchical (with the difference that the hierarchy is a horizontal, spatialized, one), and yet at the same time bafflingly mobile.[24] Black eunuchs and white eunuchs, soldiers and guards, domestic servants and wives, slaves and concubines, Kurds and Albanians: all have their assigned roles, catalogued over and over again by a long tradition of European travelers; and yet slaves can rise to positions of power, and concubines can become the honored and well-remunerated mothers of sultans. Beginning with early modern Venetian ambassadors, travelers paint a picture of "Oriental splendor" in which social hierarchies form a source of fascination with the Ottoman empire at least equal to that of the harem, and constitute part of the "imperial envy" that Gerald MacLean has proposed should be known as "Ottomanism."[25] The early modern Venetian reports in particular are at once valuable historical sources and documents of enduring ideological fantasies about the Ottomans, in which similar moments of bafflement about the logic governing class relations are a recurrent topos. A very early example comes from Ottaviano Bon's 1608 *Serraglio del Gransignore*; Venetian ambassador

24 On the spatialization of hierarchy in the Sultan's harem, see Leslie P. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6–12. See also Booth, *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), especially the essays by İrvin Cemil Schick, "The Harem as Gendered Space and the Spatial Reproductin of Gender," and Jateen Lad, "Panoptic Bodies: Black Eunuchs as Guardians of the Topkapı Harem."

25 See Gerald MacLean, "Ottomanism before Orientalism? Bishop King Praises Henry Blount, Passenger in the Levant," in *Travel Knowledge: European "Discoveries" in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Ivo Kamyo and Joytsna G. Singh (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 85–96. MacLean's interest is very specifically in *British* imperial envy, and his range of reference exclusively Anglo-Ottoman; further elaborations on Ottomanism would have to take into account the importance of relations between the Venetian Republic and the Ottomans. For more on this question see Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Bronwen Wilson, *The World in Venice: Print, the City, and Early Modern Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinopole*.

to Constantinople, Bon risked his life to enter the private apartments of the Topkapı Palace, and became the first Westerner to do so, at least as legend has it.[26] His *Relazione* is remarkable for its finely detailed account of the organization of the Sultan's household. Somewhat in awe, Bon reports on the duties, stipends, apprenticeships, and career trajectories of all its members, from Janissaries and eunuchs, cooks and bath attendants, to wives and mothers. That the accuracy of his understanding of its complicated hierarchies has been confirmed by modern historical studies makes it all the more interesting that he should single out as worthy of note what appears to him to be a particular irregularity in class relations.[27] Thus, in explaining practices of marriage and divorce, Bon reports that, in a reversal of Christian custom, it is the man, rather than the woman, who brings a dowry to a marriage, a fact that elicits an explanation but no expression of censure or marvel on Bon's part. What does seem to trouble him, instead, is that class differences might be produced between mothers and daughters. What lies at the root of Bon's puzzlement seems to have been the fact that Ottoman women could not only maintain ownership of property but also, in anticipation of their own divorce or widowhood, save up their stipends and accumulate goods so as to attract husbands once they were sent away to the Old Serraglio, the residence reserved for cast-offs and widows. Class differences might consequently be produced between mothers and daughters, depending on the means they had accumulated: "onde per ciò spesso occorre vedersi, che la figlia di un re sultana sia maritata in un bassà, e che la madre di quella figlia sia moglie d'un soggetto molto disuguale di titolo e di ricchezza del genero, del che non si tiene alcun conto" [whence as a result it often happens that a sultan's daughter is married to a pasha, and the mother of that daughter is the wife of a subject very unequal to her son-in-law in title and wealth, of which no account at

26 According to his report, Bon entered the apartments during the Sultan's absence and with the complicity of the head gardener. See Ottaviano Bon, *Il serraglio del Gransignore*, ed. Bruno Basile (Rome: Salerno Editore, 2002).

27 Leslie P. Pierce writes that "Of all the ambassadorial writings for the sixteenth century, those of the Venetians surpass all others in their volume, comprehensiveness, sophistication and accuracy." At the same time, of course, interesting blind spots dot the accounts. Pierce singles out a particular blindness, shared by a number of early travelers, to the power wielded by the Sultan's mother, the *valide sultan*, remarking that even Bon, whose stay in Istanbul overlapped with an extraordinarily powerful example, may have thought Western readers would find it "more satisfying to believe that power lay with the sultan's concubine rather than with his mother." See Pierce, *The Imperial Harem*, 117.

all is taken].[28] In his understated way, Bon seems disturbed that no social importance is attributed to this disparity in class relations between mother and daughter. It is remarkable, I think, that Bon seems more disturbed by the "inequality" of class status within the members of a single family than by the fact that women were property owners.

As we have remarked in the previous chapter, mobility of class-belonging was a feature of Ottoman society that allowed *rinnegati* to better their circumstances within the imperial hierarchy. By the mid-nineteenth century the practical availability of that option had no doubt lessened considerably, but its literary currency seems to have increased in value, to judge by the travelogue of Belgiojoso's contemporary, Gérard de Nerval, whose 1843 trip to Ottoman-governed lands was recounted in his 1851 *Voyage en Orient*. For Nerval, the topoi of "turning Turk" and class mobility are fully enmeshed. In an episode that recalls Nizzoli's account of intra-European conflict, Nerval tells of a dinner with the French consul and several of his countrymen at which the conversation turns to "une affaire qui était jugée très grave et faisait grand bruit dans la société franque" [an affair that was judged to be very serious and caused a commotion in Frankish society]:

> Un pauvre diable de Français, un domestique, avait résolu de se faire musulman, et ce qu'il y avait de plus singulier, c'est que sa femme aussi voulait embrasser l'islamisme. On s'occupait des moyens d'empêcher ce scandale: le clergé franc avait pris à coeur la chose, mais le clergé musulman mettait de l'amour- propre à triompher de son côté. Les uns offraient au couple infidèle de l'argent, une bonne place et différents avantages; les autres disait au mari: "Tu auras beau faire, en restant chrétien, tu seras toujours ce que tu es: ta vie est clouée là; on n'a jamais vu en Europe un domestique devenir seigneur. Chez nous, le dernier des valets, un esclave, un marmiton, devient emir, pacha, ministre; il épouse la fille du sultan: l'âge n'y fait rien; l'espérance du premier rang ne nous quitte qu'à la mort."[29]
>
> [A poor devil of a Frenchman, a servant, had resolved to become Muslim, and what was most remarkable, was that his wife also wanted to embrace Islam. Everyone was busy with ways to prevent this scandal: the Frankish

28 Bon, *Il serraglio del Gransignore*, 53.

29 Gérard de Nerval, *Voyage in Orient*, ed. Michel Jeanneret (Paris: Garner-Flammarion, 1980), 1: 206.

> cleric had taken the thing to heart, but the Muslim cleric had committed his pride to triumphing on his side. The former offered the infidel couple money, a good position, and various advantages; the latter said to the husband: "You'll be in fine shape, by remaining Christian, you'll always be what you are now. Your life will be nailed right there. No one has ever seen a servant become master in Europe. But with us, the lowliest of valets, a slave, a scullion, becomes an emir, a pasha, a minister; he marries the daughter of a sultan. Age has no importance, the hope of high rank abandons us only at death."]

For the servant or slave it is a dream of class mobility come true, and only death puts a stop to it.[30] Small wonder it occasions scandal, for why wouldn't every domestic servant grab at the chance to become a pasha? The point is not lost on Nerval, who goes on to remark that the possibility held out by the Muslim side actualizes the "principe d'égalité qui, chez nous, n'est écrit que dans les codes" (207) [the principle of equality which, in France, is written only in the laws]. For Nerval, the Orient is the site of the actualization of a principle to which France can lay particular claim, and yet which remains a dead letter on the books.

Belgiojoso, instead, defamiliarizes this same principle and displaces it onto the Orient, only to contemplate its uncanny return. That return is even more uncanny than she knows, for it is already hidden in the "pretty European furniture" whose imagined soiling caused her such distress. The property-owning Belgiojoso is precise in specifying that one of the pieces she fears might serve as resting place for her scullery maid was a *causeuse*. This loveseat-like piece, meant, as the name implies, to foster conversation, was a four-place couch that, like a number of other chairs and couches introduced in France in the eighteenth century, including the *ottomane*, was inspired by the Turkish *divan*, as Madeleine Dobie has documented in a delightful discussion of

30 Indeed, the passage echoes confessions of renegades before the Spanish Inquisitors, as collected by Bartolomé Bennassar and Lucile Bennassar, offered as examples of what they call the "rêve 'Turc'," on analogy with the American dream of social and economic mobility. They cite one Jean-Baptiste de Mytilène, a renegade captured at a very young age in the seventeenth century and who went on to become a feared corsair, who put it very succinctly. Jean-Baptiste explained to his witnesses: "on est pauvre comme chrétien tandis que l'on devient riche si on se fait Turc," and then concluded "Si tu es chrétien, tu iras au paradis des ânes." [As a Christian, you are poor, whereas you become rich if you turn Turk … If you are Christian, you will go to the paradise of donkeys.] Bennassar and Bennassar, *Chrétiens d'Allah*, 371.

women, the Orient, and eighteenth-century furniture.[31] One might say, then, that Belgiojoso's furniture has already been "Ottomanized," already contaminated, thereby confirming the claim that "by the time one has encountered and repudiated filth, it is too late – the subject is already besmirched by it."[32] The disorder in class and property relations that Belgiojoso imagines as a threat from without turns out, as always, to be a threat from within.

On the one hand, what could be less of a surprise than to discover that an aristocrat might, in the mid-nineteenth century, find class mobility to be a threat? Born into one noble Milanese family and married into another, Belgiojoso was proud of her pedigree, as her biographers never tire of remarking. Augustin Thierry recounts an anecdote to illustrate the "racial" origins of her pride: "Ceux-ci sont une race altière et difficile. Les traits de leur superbe emplissent la chronique. Pour n'en rappeler que cet example – une des tantes paternelles de donna Cristina n'accepta jamais de se marier, ne consentant pas à changer de nom. Au lit de mort, exhortée à l'humilité par son confesseur, elle répondait dans un cri de révolte: Si, sono un verme, ma Trivulzio."[33] [They are a haughty and difficult race. The traits of their arrogance fill the chronicles. To recall but one example: one of Lady Cristina's paternal aunts never agreed to marry, not consenting to a change of name. On her deathbed, exhorted to humility by her confessor, she replied with a cry of rebellion: Yes, I am a worm, but a Trivulzio.] Belgiojoso's exile brought with it an experience of downward mobility when the Austrian authorities sequestered her property, thereby leaving her to fend for herself in Paris.[34] In her *Souvenirs dans l'exil* Belgiojoso remembers her early days in Paris as a fairytale come true, although in her case the story is that of a reverse Cinderella. As Belgiojoso writes to her friend Madame Joubert, it was as though a wicked witch had turned the princess into a pauper:

> Il faut avoir passé sans transition d'une vie splendide, toujours entourée d'amis et de serviteurs, à un état d'isolément absolu, pour connaître un

31 See Dobie, *Foreign Bodies*, 91.

32 See William A. Cohen, "Introduction: Locating Filth," in *Filth: Dirt, Disgust, and Modern Life*, ed. William A. Cohen and Ryan Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. x.

33 Thierry, *La princesse Belgiojoso*, 5.

34 A decree of April 19, 1831 froze her assets and threatened her with civil death; her estate remained under sequester until a general political amnesty was declared in 1838. She had, in the meantime, however, regained possession of her revenues. See Brombert, *Cristina Belgiojoso*, 92–99.

> genre d'angoisse et de détresse dont l'excès étonne. Je me rappelai alors avec émotion ce conte de mon enfance qui m'avait tant intéressée. C'était une méchante fée, qui, d'un coup de baguette, transformait en paysanne une jeune princesse: et la pauvre personne se prenait à pleurer amèrement, ne sachant plus marcher avec des sabots, ne voulant pas manger dans l'étain, incapable de pétrir une galette, de traire une vache ou de filer une quenouille. Voilà à peu près mon histoire, disais-je tristement.[35]
>
> [You have to have passed, without transition, from a splendid life, always surrounded by friends and servants, to a state of absolute isolation, to know a kind of anxiety and distress whose excess stuns. I remembered then with emotion a tale that had much interested me in childhood. It was about a wicked fairy who, with a touch of the wand, transformed a young princess into a peasant. And the poor person began to cry bitterly, not knowing how to walk in her clogs, not wanting to eat from a tin, incapable of kneading dough, milking a cow, or spinning a spindle. That's pretty much my story, I said sadly.]

Like the princess transformed into a peasant, Belgiojoso tells us she could price an antique medal but couldn't tell one piece of small change from another, that she could paint and sing but had never boiled an egg or planned a meal. It is more than a little difficult to muster sympathy for the princess who landed in Paris and was soon taken up by Madame Récamier and General Lafayette (with whom she appears to have learned to boil that egg), and when she insists "Mais positivement, pendant quelques semaines, j'ai préparé de mes blanches mains mes modestes repas" (*Souvenirs*, 272) [But truly, for several weeks, I prepared my modest meals with my own white hands], we are more likely to roll our eyes than commiserate.[36] But it is revealing that

35 Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, *Ricordi nell'esilio*, ed. Maria Francesca Davi (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2001), 270. This edition contains the original French text, paired with an Italian translation.

36 Ginevra Conti Odorisio writes that the "frittate" that Belgiojoso prepared with the so-called "hero of two worlds" quickly became legendary, and a favorite topic in Parisian salons of the time. See Ginevra Conti Odorisio, "La questione femminile nell'ottocento e Cristina di Belgiojoso," in *Cristina di Belgiojoso. Politica e cultura nell'Europa dell'ottocento*, ed. Ginevra Conti Odorisio, Cristina Giorcelli, and Giuseppe Monsagrati (Casoria: Editore Loffredo, 2010), 47–68. Brombert takes a more sober view of the "legendary omelettes," suggesting that "her poverty, ridiculed well into the twentieth century as a pose, was perfectly genuine" (Brombert, *Cristina Belgiojoso*, 114–15).

Belgiojoso should represent her "histoire" of downward mobility as a fable, a magical transformation that takes place outside of history and apart from the political forces that, in her other writings and even in her analysis of the Ottoman situation, were very much present to her. The class position from which she speaks thus remains inviolate; it is the stable point that makes possible her perspective, and that provides her with an *oikos*.

I would like to suggest that in this particular instance it is Belgiojoso's view from above that, sharpened perhaps by her temporary, and "magical," crossing of class boundaries, allows her to bring into view an internally differentiated Orient. In her terms, this means an "Arab Orient," a "Turkish Orient," and a "Christian Orient," as well as a multiplicity of harems whose internal differences go against the "ideal stereotype" of *the* Oriental harem: the Imperial harem of the Sultan taken as synecdoche of Ottoman social organization and sexual segregation in general.[37] Belgiojoso instead offers a typology of harems based on the social class of their owners:

> Le mot de *harem* désigne un être complexe et multiforme. Il y a le harem du pauvre, celui de la classe moyenne et du grand seigneur, le harem de province et le harem de la capitale, celui de la campagne et celui de la ville, du jeune homme et du viellard, du pieux musulman regrettant l'ancien régime et du musulman esprit fort, sceptique, amateur de réformes et portant redingote. Chacun de ces harems a son caractère particulier, son degré d'importance, ses moeurs et ses habitudes. (*Asie mineure*, 94)
>
> [The word "harem" designates a complex and multiform entity. There is the poor man's harem, that of the middle class and that of the sultan, the provincial harem and the harem of the capital, that of the country and that of the city, of the young man and of the old, of the pious Muslim who misses the old order, and the Muslim of strong and skeptical spirit, lover of reforms and wearing redingote. Each of these harems has its own character, its degree of importance, its morals and habits.]

37 As Reina Lewis writes, "the stereotype of the actual imperial seraglio (the biggest, most hierarchical, and richest of Oriental harems) came to stand in as a signifier of all harems: dominant Orientalist discourse could talk of 'the' harem with a clear sense of what it meant and of the spatial relations it enacted. To this extent, the generic harem of Orientalist fantasy operated as what Mills calls an 'ideal/stereotypical level of space.'" See Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism*, 183.

If this typology complicates the ideal stereotype of the harem and might even be granted some historical accuracy, it also performs the ideological work of reconciling the simultaneous rigidity and mobility of Ottoman class structure. That is to say, if relations among classes and races are perceived to be disturbingly mobile *within* individual harems, class relations are restored and rigidified in the relation *among* harems.

One might argue that a similar relation between mobility and rigidity also characterizes Belgiojoso's self-representation and narration. If Belgiojoso travels, and narrates her traveling, she does so not as a postmodern nomad avant la lettre, as has recently been suggested. Rather, her mobility is tethered not only to her class position but to ownership of property. From this point of view, a final examination of Belgiojoso's framing of *Asie mineure et Syrie* is instructive. After the brief opening section containing the "harem hook" which, by the 1850s, was as much a marketing ploy as anything else, Belgiojoso describes her point of departure:

> Un mot d'abord sur les lieux que j'habite. La vallée di Ciaq-Maq-Oglou (vallée du 'fils de la Pierre à fusil') est à quelques jours de la ville importante d'Angora. C'est dans ce coin de l'Orient, à la fois pittoresque et fertile, que j'ai fixé ma résidence; c'est de cette vallée que je suis partie pour entrer dans la vie nomade. (*Asie mineure*, 3)

> [A word on the place where I live. The valley of Çakmakoğlu (valley of 'the son of flint') is several days away from the important city of Angora. It is in this corner of the Orient, at once picturesque and fertile, that I established my residence; it is from this valley that I departed to enter into the nomadic life.]

This "corner of the Orient" is represented as her personal property, a fixed and stable point from which to depart and to which to return, an *oikos* that makes it possible for her to take up a "nomadic life." Building upon this self-representation, Mirella Scriboni would like Belgiojoso to fit the description of Rosi Braidotti's Deleuzian nomad, but Belgiojoso's insistence upon taking up residence on land she owned, and the way she suggests that she herself is the continuation of the Osman Pasha's genealogy, strikes me as anything but "rhizomatic."[38] Belgiojoso portrays the valley from

38 See Mirella Scriboni, "Prefazione," in Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, *Un principe curdo*, ed. Mirella Scriboni (Ferrara: Luciana Tufani Editrice, 1998), 16.

which she departs as her recent purchase, and her relation to the Orient as proprietary: "For five thousand francs," she writes, "I bought the valley of Çakmakoğlu … ." Along with the valley comes not only a house and a mill but a history and a genealogy, and it is with that history that her account begins. As Belgiojoso tells it, the property had previously been in the hands of Mussa-Bey (Musa Aĝa), whom she identifies as son of Osman Pasha, and who, in the early part of the nineteenth century, had waged war upon the Sultan Mahmut II (1785–1839) and his reforms. The war in question as Belgiojoso describes it bears an uncanny (and unremarked) similarity to the Italian situation that had caused her exile in the first place: "Il leur semblait d'ailleurs, à ces montagnards de l'Asie Mineure, qu'ils défendait la cause de l'indépendence nationale contre une armée étrangère" (6) [Besides, it seemed to these mountaineers of Asia Minor, that they were defending the cause of national independence against a foreign army]. In Musa Aĝa's case, the war ended badly; he was decapitated and his family enslaved and, although his descendents were later freed by Mahmut's son Abdülmecit, they had by then "degenerated," in Belgiojoso's words, and the property had fallen into disuse and ruin. Along came Belgiojoso, the "Frankish lady," to buy up the valley and appear to revive and carry on property, family line, and yet another national cause; it is from this "home" that she departs to undertake the first leg of her journey with the youngest brother of Musa Aĝa in her company (*Asie mineure*, 25). Such is Belgiojoso's own account. Recent research in Ottoman records by Mehmet Yavuz Erler, however, reveals a more complicated history, and not only answers the question raised by her biographers as to whether non-Ottoman subjects could in fact own land in Ottoman territory but sheds light on the degree to which Belgiojoso "fixes" her point of departure.[39] According to Erler, in 1850 Belgiojoso rented the çiftlik of Çakmakoğlu, a çiftlik being a kind of fief that belonged to the Ottoman state, but whose use could be bought or sold. In 1851 new Westernizing laws made it possible for such land to become private property, but only to citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Belgiojoso herself was officially only a "guest" of the Ottoman Empire (perhaps because she was simultaneously seeking to regain her estates in Italy, which had been confiscated by the Austrian government). In order to purchase the property, Belgiojoso's daughter, Marie, consequently requested and was granted Ottoman citizenship; Erler notes, moreover, that "she was

39 See Mehmet Yavuz Erler, "An Italian Princess in the Ottoman Empire, 1850–1855," in *Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso: An Italian Princess in the 19th C. Turkish Countryside*, ed. Antonio Fabris (Venice: Filippi Editore, 2010), 29–42.

liable to lose the property, if she asked to be recognized as a refugee, fleeing from the Austrian Empire."[40] If it is in keeping with the "hallucination of aloneness" that Belgiojoso should neglect to mention her daughter's role, it is also symptomatic of the importance of a proprietary relation to the Orient to the perspective from which she speaks, not least as a reformist.

Indeed, before leaving the land of harems and bringing *La vie intime* to a close, Belgiojoso ends her travel narrative with a chapter devoted to "The Qur'an and Reforms in Turkey." Her diagnosis of the situation is merciless and openly avowed as that of a Christian bent on reform. Characterized as a theocratic state for which immobility is a sign of strength, and which was created not to form a nation or better a society but rather to create a strong military, the Ottoman state is spared no criticism. Given its aim to create a warrior society, she writes, the state has no place for the affections that tie men to hearth and home, and hence family must not take root and women must be morally destroyed. The harem is singled out as the site of that destruction, for it allegedly deprives women of the civilizing role that, elsewhere, she implies, they play in relation to the nation. For similar reasons, she goes on to say, wealth is not to put to civilizing ends, not circulated as capital and employed to improve material life, but rather converted into diamonds and jewels and buried in the gardens of the wealthy (in a scenario that cannot but recall for her readers the image of Ali Baba's cave). Muhammad asks three things of the faithful, she writes: "Obéir, combattre, et mourir" [Obey, combat, and die] (a slogan that uncannily and proleptically brings to mind Mussolini's later slogan, "Credere, obbedire, combattere" [Believe, obey, and combat]).

And yet, if Belgiojoso's view of Muslim law and institutions is scathing, she clears a space for reform in her assessment of the character of the Turkish people. The notion of national character provides one of the links between her reformist projects in Anatolia and her support for the unification of Italy. In the Turkish case she sees in the "excellent" character of the Turks a possibility of subverting what she views as the deplorable Muslim institutions, a possibility brought out in relation to an unthinkable scenario: the transfer of Muslim law to Europe:

> Je me suis souvent demandé ce que deviendrait, non pas une nation, mais seulement une famille européene qui prétendrait ne suivre d'autre loi que celle de l'Islam, et c'est à piene si j'ai osé formuler une réponse à

40 Erler, "An Italian Princess," 38.

> ma propre question. Cependant les déplorables résultats qu'aurait pour des Européens l'établissement de la loi musulmane ne sont pas visibles ici. Quoique autorisé à mépriser et à maltraiter ses femmes, le Turc les entoure d'égards et de tendresse. La loi veut la femme esclave; l'homme, qui pourrait commander, préfère lui complaire. Souvent aussi elle abuse de cet empire, auquel elle ne peut faire valoir aucun titre; mais quoi qu'elle fasse, jamais la force de l'homme n'est employée à la faire rentre dans l'ordre. (*Asie mineure*, 229)
>
> [I have often asked myself what would happen if a European family, and not even a nation, were to follow no other law than that of Islam, and I have hardly dared to give an answer to my own questions. Nevertheless, the deplorable results that the establishment of Muslim law would have for Europeans are not visible here. Although authorized to scorn and mistreat their women, the Turk surrounds them with attentions and tenderness. The law wants woman a slave; man, who could command, prefers to please her. What's more, she often abuses this power/empire, to which she can lay no claim; but whatever she does, never do men use force to bring her back to order.]

It is a curious turn in her argument, for the implication is that Islamic law would authorize the tyranny and misogyny of the European male, a misogyny we assume she deplores and of which Muslim men are imagined to be innocent. We are offered a double vision of the harem, with the positive view of the seclusion of the harem as arising from a culture that respects women superimposed upon the negative view of the harem as destructive of women's character. Belgiojoso goes on to praise the gentleness and general docility of the Turkish people, taking care to specify that these qualities are to be found only in the lower classes who live in the countryside or in provincial towns; the urban upper classes have instead already been Westernized, even if they claim to abhor all things not Turkish.

Belgiojoso's politics back home present a more complicated scenario, at the same time as concerns about the mobility and rigidity of class structures pervade her thinking. In her own personal project of social reform Belgiojoso advocated education for peasants – men, women, and children alike – and carried out her conviction by instituting schools, including nursery schools, on her property in Locate during the years when she was not in exile, much to the irritation of her fellow landowners, who rightly saw it as a threat to class structure. Critics have noted the Fourierist influence that likely motivated

this project, resembling as it does, at least to some extent, the utopian communites known as *phalanstères* that he envisioned. As Sandro Bortone remarks, "to fully appreciate the radicality of Belgiojoso's project, one must recall that nursery schools were opposed by the Church, and by those who saw them as a threat to the social order as constituted."[41] The reaction of none other than Alessandro Manzoni, whose mother Giulia Verri was a close friend of Belgiojoso's, provides a case in point. The Catholic Manzoni refused to allow Belgiojoso to speak to his mother on her deathbed in 1841 because of the scandal associated with her. Whether the scandal was sexual or political for Manzoni (Balzac, for example, seems to have thought she was a courtesan, and hence did not frequent her salon) is not entirely clear; nevertheless, Manzoni is quoted as remarking of the "mania di quella signora di diffondere l'istruzione ne' suoi contadini:" "Quando saranno tutti dotti, a chi toccherà coltivare la terra?" [mania of that woman of spreading education to her peasants: When everyone is educated, who will cultivate the earth?][42] Belgiojoso instead belonged to that Lombard Enlightenment tradition that originated with Giulia Verri's father, Pietro Verri, as well as Cesare Beccaria: "uomini," she wrote, "di mente e di cuore, che nati nell'ordine privilegiato, aborrivano i privilegi, ed esposti a perdere tutto ove si mandassero ad atto le dottrine dell'uguaglianza, si adoperavano pure con quanta autorità potevano a propagarle ed a inculcarle"[43] [men of heart and mind, who, born to privilege, yet abhorred privilege, and vulnerable to losing all should those doctrines of equality be put into action, yet took it upon themselves with all the authority they had to propagate and inculcate them]. In this sense, she stands as an example of what A. S. Kahan has termed "aristocratic liberalism," a particular synergy between nobility and liberalism which, in the Italian context, was especially present in Lombardy and Tuscany, and which was inspired by a tradition of civic humanism that granted intellectual elites responsibility for leadership.[44] As Marco Meriggi has pointed out, although the exponents of Lombard aristocratic liberalism were certainly far from identifying

41 The original reads: "per non valutare in modo inadequato l'iniziativa della Belgiojoso occorre tenere presente quanto in Italia l'istituzione di asili infantili fosse allora avversata dalla chiesa a da chi concordava nel vederci una minaccia per l'ordine sociale costituito." Cristina di Belgiojoso, *Il 1848 a Milano e a Venezia con uno scritto sulla condizione delle donne*, ed. Sandro Bortone (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1977), 19.

42 Belgiojoso, *Il 1848 a Milano e a Venezia*, 20; cited in Severgnini, *La principessa di Belgiojoso*, 74.

43 Belgiojoso, Studi intorno alla storia della Lombardia, 5.

44 See Alan S. Kahan, *Aristocratic Liberalism: The Social and Political Thought of Jacob*

themselves with the masses, whom they regarded paternalistically, those masses represented less of a threat than the bureaucratic State aligned with Austrian rule.[45] The only road foreseen to emancipation from Austrian rule led directly through the political independence, and unification, of Italy, and hence through an attention to the education of those same masses. As we saw, Belgiojoso herself was not so eager to lose her privilege, but education was part and parcel of the reform of national character which she deemed necessary for the success of Italian Unification.

Reforming National Characters

In a much later text, the 1868 *Osservazioni sullo stato attuale dell'Italia e sul suo avvenire*, Belgiojoso turned to the question of the making of the Italian nation in terms of national character, participating in a debate that continues to this day. Here Belgiojoso writes for the first time in Italian, which she specifies as her "lingua nativa," for an explicitly political reason: "scrivo perché parmi di avere qualche cosa da dire che possa per avventura riescire non inutile al mio paese" [I write because I think I have something to say that might perchance not be useless for my country].[46] With only Rome not yet included in the newly unified nation, Belgiojoso offers a diagnosis of Italy's present challenges, which included national characters formed by centuries of foreign domination and varying in degree by region. "Abbiamo altro da fare che congratularci vicendevolmente per le conquiste ultimate," she writes: "Dobbiamo costruirci fortemente, e vincere quelle abitudini del nostro carattere che si oppongono al nostro sviluppo morale, intellettuale e nazionale" (75) [We have more to do than congratulate ourselves for the completion of our conquest. We must construct ourselves forcefully, and defeat those habits of our character that oppose our moral, intellectual and national development]. Chief among these habits of character is an aversion to work and a tendency "conforme all'indole nostra e dei popoli meridionali

Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

45 See Marco Meriggi, "Cristina di Belgiojoso e il liberalismo aristocratico Lombardo," in *Cristina di Belgiojoso. Politica e cultura nell'Europa dell'ottocento*, ed. Ginevra Conti Odorisio, Cristina Giorcelli, and Giuseppe Monsagrati (Casoria: Loffredo Editore, 2010), 13–26.

46 Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, *Osservazioni sullo stato attuale dell'Italia e sul suo avvenire* (Milan: Francesco Vallardi, 1868).

in generale" [corresponding to our character and to that or southern peoples in general] (77) to abandon themselves to a life of leisure. Identifying herself explicitly with northern Italians, Belgiogioso nevertheless extends her diagnosis to all classes and all inhabitants of the peninsula, who must all be "educati alla libertà" [educated for freedom] (84). In her view, the scions of the illustrious families of northern Italy have squandered their patrimony in misguided imitation of English aristocrats, and become "effeminate" (82); the peasants are equally unwilling to do even an hour's more work than strictly necessary. Her characterization of northerners, and in particular of the Lombards and Tuscans she admits she knows best, is scathing in its assessment of the damage done to the Italian character by the "perpetual servitude" (87) in which they had lived: the aversion to work and a tendency to abandon themselves to idleness, exacerbated by foreign domination, are ubiquitous. Not unexpectedly, however, the farther south she goes, the more dire her assessment, not least because of the greater influence of the Church:

> L'Italia meridionale è per così dire esclusivamente ligia al suo clero, e a quelle torme di frati e di monache che la divorano. L'Italia settentrionale non è così accieccata, o almeno gli abitanti delle sue città si sono sottratti alla tutela clericale; ma le popolazioni delle nostre campagne sono nelle mani del clero tanto quanto le popolazioni del mezzodì. (91)
>
> [Southern Italy is, in a manner of speaking, exclusively faithful to its clergy, and to those herds of monks and nuns who devour it. Northern Italy is not so blinded, or at least the inhabitants of its cities have escaped from clerical control; but the populations of our countryside are in the hands of the clergy just as much as the populations of the south.]

If she finds Neapolitans to be "better than their stereotype," and to have been sufficiently dazzled by Garibaldi to have been distracted from religion, they nevertheless are portrayed as in need of education, having been ruled by a "despot" and a clergy "fomenter of superstition and ignorance" (84). Sicilians fare less well. Reacting to the massive anti-government revolt that took place in Palermo in 1866, Belgiojoso indulges in the anti-Southern, Orientalizing sentiment widespread among northern Italians more generally, and not limited to her social class:

> Ivi la corruzione si mesce alla naturale ferocia di una popolazione derivata in parte dall'Arabo, e quell'isola che fu un giorno popolare e ricca oltre

> ogni credere, non ha fatto sin qui uso della acquistata libertà se non per compiere atti che non si possono paragonare che alle carneficine del medio evo, o dei popoli selvaggi. (18)
>
> [There corruption is mixed with the natural ferocity of a population derived in part from the Arabs, and that island that once was populous and rich beyond belief, has as yet made no use of the freedom it has acquired except by committing acts that can only be compared to medieval slaughters, or to savage peoples.]

Such a population is deserving of nothing less than "severe repressioni" [severe repressions] (19), observes Belgiojoso, justifying after the fact the mass executions that were carried out by the forces of the House of Savoy. Belgiojoso here participates in an Orientalism of a different stripe, one that has been called an "Orientalism in one country" that characterizes the "southern question."[47] All of this adds up to a recommendation that the newly approved constitution be modified according to the various "stages of civilization" to which various populations have arrived (156).

Belgiojoso's reflection on the Turkish household and her suggestion that women had a civilizing role to play in the reformation of national character might lead us to expect that women and the family would play a significant role in the case of Italy as well. And the fact that, in *Osservazioni*, she declares unequivocally that the era of the patriarchal family is over, and that it has neither place nor mission in modern industrial society, certainly feeds the hope that a social reform of the family might be contemplated. In the only other of her texts written in Italian, the 1866 *Della presente condizione delle donne e del loro avvenire* [Of the Present Condition of Women and of Their Future], however, Belgiojoso takes a different turn. The essay is fraught with an ambivalence reflected in the structure of the essay itself, split between a hard-nosed analysis of the ideological construction of femininity and a refusal to recommend the radical social change that would seem to follow logically from that analysis. In her opening gambit, Belgiojoso wastes no words in affirming the intellectual and moral equality of women to men; if women were treated as inferior in antiquity, it was because only physical strength mattered, and women's comparative physical weakness facilitated the development of social structures that acted upon and enforced that

47 I refer to the volume edited by Jane Schneider, *Italy's Southern Question*.

inferiority. Denied education, women fell victim to ruses through which they have been trained that their main occupation is to be loved by men, and were thus persuaded to embody a difference from men by adopting precisely the opposite of all the qualities that are admired in men. If men are strong, women should be weak; if men are skilled in science and mathematics, women should be devoted to the fine arts, and so on. It is through this determinate negation that what Belgiojoso calls the "carattere fittizio, di cui le donne si sono rivestite per piacere agli uomini" [the fictive character which women have donned to please men] develops. The suggestion that femininity is a construction that might be donned as one does clothing is remarkably resonant with late twentieth-century theorizations of gender as performative and of "womanliness as masquerade."[48]

> Dalla donna si richiede espressamente la più perfetta ignoranza: e chi non conosce i ridicoli soprannomi apposti alle donne colte, il deplorabile effetto di un bel ditto macchiato d'inchiostro, ecc. ecc.? Gli uomini persuasero le donne che la loro ammirazione, il loro affetto era a prezzo della loro inferiorità intellettuale, e le donne hanno così creduto, e ve ne hanno di colte che nascondono la loro coltura pel timore di essere annoverate fra le donne superiori, le pedanti, ed altre simili abbominazioni. (*Della presente condizione*, 171)
>
> [Women are asked to be perfectly ignorant: and who doesn't know the ridiculous nicknames given to cultivated women, the deplorable effect of a beautiful finger spotted with ink, etc. etc.? Men persuaded women that their admiration, their affection, came at the price of women's intellectual inferiority, and women believed them, and there are cultivated women who hide their culture out of fear of being numbered among superior women, pedants, and other such abominations.]

This "fictive femininity" is so shaped by, and shaping of, social institutions, that even though Belgiojoso finds women's present condition to be a remnant of barbarism ("un avanzo di questa barbarie," 175), she can find no path to radical reform. Family as currently constituted is at the root of women's subordination; like Cesare Beccaria before her, Belgiojoso notes that every family is made up of a tyrant and his more or less resigned victims. There is

48 I refer to Joan Riviere's classic essay, "Womanliness as Masquerade," 35–44.

no explicit or even implicit reference to her Oriental writings in this essay, and yet one cannot but note that the sort of "Oriental despotism" that one might have thought would characterize the OttomanTurkish family is to be found instead the modern Italian family:

> Non sarebbe ormai tempo che la società così ansiosa di abbattere tutte le tirannidi, e di stendere la mano a tutti gli oppressi (del che la benedico e la lodo) si ricordasse che in ogni casa, in ogni famiglia, v'hanno vittime più o meno rassegnate … ? (178)
>
> [Wouldn't it be time by now for a society so anxious to destroy all tyrannies, and to extend a helping hand to all the oppressed (for which I bless and praise it) to remember that in every home, in every family, there are more or less resigned victims … ?]

Echoes of the Fourierist and Saint-Simonian influences she had encountered in Paris can be heard here in the trenchant egalitarianism that informs her diagnosis.[49] Yet her egalitarianism stops short of the threshold of emancipationist feminism. With the entire fabric of society dependent upon the subordination of women, Belgiojoso cannot find her way to a proposal of radical reform:

> Da qualunque parte io mi volga per trovare una via di riformare radicalmente la odierna condizione delle donne, scorgo difficoltà così molteplici, così varie e così gravi, che quantunque codesta condizione mi sembri un avanzo della passata barbarie, e un indizio che di questa barbarie non siamo ancora intieramente liberi, non saprei mai alzare la voce per chiederne la riforma. (174)
>
> [Whichever way I turn to find a way to radically reform the present condition of women, I see so many, so various, and such serious difficulties, that although this condition seems to be a remnant of the barbarism of the past, and a sign that we are not yet entirely free of this barbarism, I would never know how to raise my voice to ask for reform.]

49 Belgiojoso was in contact with Fourier's disciple, Victor Considérant, whose journal "La démocratie pacifique" she financed in 1844, and for which she wrote. See Sandro Bertone, "Prefazione," 18–19.

Critics have registered their disappointment with this turn in the essay, finding in it the limit of Belgiojoso's engagement and an implicit response to, and critique of, the juridical reforms that Anna Maria Mozzoni had begun to propose in 1864 with her *La donna e i suoi rapporti sociali in occasione della revisione del codice civile italiano*.[50] And, indeed, Belgiojoso quite explicitly keeps her distance from those who ask for emancipation, associating "la donna libera" [the free woman] with "libertinaggio" [libertinism], and cautioning that sudden reform could only lead to an unraveling of the entire social fabric that would be detrimental to the more urgent goal of nation building, thereby opposing "la donna libera" [the free woman] to "la nazione fatta libera" [the freed nation] (184). Key in this respect is the role of women as mothers and wives, both of which are deemed to be the foundation of the social edifice, and neither of which is yet imagined to be substitutable for any but the few exceptional women of which she herself is an example. In a passage that uncannily recalls Manzoni's question about who will till the fields if the peasants are educated, Belgiojoso asks "Chi si sostituirebbe alla madre nelle cure e nella educazione dei figli, mentre la madre educherebbe se stessa a vita diversa? Chi si sostituirebbe alla moglie nella fiducia nel marito, nel governo della casa? A me tali riforme appaiono di una impossibile esecuzione" (182) [Who will substitute for the mother in the care and education of children, while the mother educates herself for a different life? Who will substitute for the wife in the husband's trust, in running the household? Such reforms seem to me to be impossible to carry out]. What's worse, she goes on to say, if both women and men were educated, marriage would be intolerable (as indeed it was for Belgiojoso herself). Her ability to imagine concrete reforms runs aground on the bed of compulsory heterosexuality itself, "E poichè la irresistible natura della donna e dell'uomo lega l'uno all'altra per l'intiera loro vita, riconosciamo e confessiamo che l'esercizio di due libere volontà equalmente tenaci ed egualmente legittime, renderebbe sovente intollerabile il coniugale consorzio" (182) [And since the irresistible nature of woman and man ties one to the other for their entire lives, let us recognize and confess that the exercise of two free wills equally tenacious and equally legitimate, would make conjugal union frequently intolerable]. Belgiojoso consequently counsels patience, recommends that the good of the nation take precedence over that of women, and switches into a rhetorical mode in which visions of a just society in the future are evoked ("parmi vedere

50 See Odoriso, "La questione femminile nell'ottocento e Cristina di Belgiojoso," 56–58.

nel glorioso avvenire della mia patria" (185) [I seem to see it in the glorious future of my fatherland] and the question of female worth simply set aside for as long as the work of nation-building is underway.[51]

Turkish Tales

If sidelined in her observations about her native country, however, a concern with women's character re-emerges in her only foray into fiction, the three novellas that make up Belgiojoso's 1858 *Scènes de la vie turque*: "Emina," "Un prince kurde," and "Les deux femmes d'Ismaïl Bey." Given the degree to which Belgiojoso was immersed in the intellectual legacy of the Enlightenment, one might well have expected that she would take up another aspect of that moment in the form of the Oriental tale, dubbed by Srinivas Aravamudan "Enlightenment Orientalism." For Aravamudan, the Oriental tale is a genre that arises in the wake of Antoine Galland's "transcreation" of *Les Milles et une nuits*, and is a transnational, transcultural product that precedes the narrowing of boundaries between national cultures associated with the rise of the nineteenth-century realist novel.[52] In "Enlightenment Orientalism" faraway geographies were the sites of porous identifications across cultures, and pseudo-ethnographies and spy chronicles were the vehicles of political critique. Aravamudan argues that romance privileged action and fantasy, in contrast to the novel, which will feature character and a normative national reality. Belgiojoso's fictions take a middle road; there are no magic carpets, no genies in lamps, no talking animals or "indiscreet jewels" in her novellas; rather, the harem becomes the site of a pseudo-ethnographic domestic realism. The title of Belgiojoso's "Scenes from Turkish Life" recalls the various sub-categories of Balzac's *Comédie humaine* – his "Scenes from Private Life,"

51 And yet if her critique stops short of recommending immediate steps that might be taken, Belgiojoso's reflection does not end here, but rather continues with a remarkable analysis of the social devaluation of women as they age that is at once devastating and heartbreaking. The female condition, she writes, is tolerable only in youth. Once women are no longer young, they are no longer of use to husbands, whom they no longer please, nor to their children, who have learned to condescend to their mothers and regard them as a beloved image belonging to the past. Bereft and uneducated, older women turn to priests who, bent on authority in this world rather than the next, egg women on to act as moral judge of their husbands and sons, thereby further alienating their families from them.

52 See Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism*.

"Scenes from Provincial Life," " Scenes from Parisian Life," and so on – and her intent seems similarly to produce a portrait of a "social species." The species in question is that of contemporary Turks as she knew them in Asia Minor; not a fantasy about Topkapı palace and its inhabitants, but tales told about individuals whose stories she claims to have heard from the characters themselves. Belgiojoso takes up a stance as sometime omniscient narrator, sometime participant observer, emplotting scenes in such a way as to take the reader by surprise when she discovers that the apparently heterodiegetic narrator was in fact acquainted with her principal characters. These are not the "predicative" Oriental tales that Todorov has theorized, in which actions are not anchored in characters, but rather are closer to what he calls "transitive fiction" in their focus on the making and ruin of character within and by the structure of the harem and the Ottoman family.[53]

All three of the tales are set in villages in Asia Minor and feature young wives who are introduced into already constituted families with existing wives. All three also feature Belgiojoso herself as a narrator who makes an appearance at the end of each tale in order to announce that she heard the story from the young wife herself, and to disavow any "novelistic" intention. As Cristina Giorcelli has noted, the first person, reformist voice of Belgiojoso is the common denominator of the tales, and her narratives tend to demonstrate a thesis concerning the deleterious effects of the polygamous family on women's character in particular.[54] What is of particular interest to us here, however, is the way in which the first two tales stage the "clash of civilizations" as taking place within the harem itself, in a gendered scenario in which the civilizing influence of a Christian – or would-be Christian – woman is exerted upon a Turkish, Muslim man. The distinction between Turkish and Muslim is key in this operation, as Belgiojoso seems to want to salvage Turkish character from Islamicate culture.

Such is the case of "Emina," the first of the three *Scènes*. Sent to tend goats as a nine-year-old girl, Emina is a kind of Turkish *Émile*; an untutored pupil of nature, she arrives at a knowledge of medicinal herbs through empirical observation of the plant and animal world and, through reasoning alone, she arrives at a truth resembling the Christian afterlife: "De raisonnement en raisonnement, Emina en était arrive à la croyance dans une vie future et éternelle, composée de récompenses et de bonheurs pour les bons, et d'abandon

53 See Tzvetan Todorov, "Les hommes-récits," in *Poétique de la prose* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971), 78–91.

54 Giorcelli, "L'Orientalismo di Cristina di Belgiojoso," 109.

sinon de châtiments pour les pervers" (12). [From reasoning to reasoning, she had arrived at the belief in a future, eternal life, composed of rewards and happiness for the good, and abandonment if not punishment for the evil]. A sort of natural-born Christian, even as a young child Emina criticizes Muslim "superstition" and what she views as the "mindless" repetition of *insciallah* by those around her. Emina is thus established as an "enlightened" figure at the outset; enlightened by nature and reason, she will be wrenched from her childhood idyll in a state of nature and introduced into the harem – the space, for Belgiojoso, of the worst kind of superstition and character-destroying rivalry among women. Married at the age of 12 to a much older husband, Hamid-Bey, who accepts Emina as collateral in a business deal, Emina enters a harem already populated by the first wife, Ansha, whose five offspring includes four boys, as well as "tout un monde d'esclaves de couleurs diverses tenues en respect par l'autorité d'Ansha" (54) [an entire world of slaves of difference races, kept in line by Ansha's authority] who also reside there. Already in the eighteenth century a "resonant image of political authoritarianism," in which women were subjugated to a tyrannical patriarch, the harem is here recast as the site of a tyrannical female authority to which men and women alike are subordinated.[55] All of the harem's inhabitants are subject to "la monarchie absolue telle qu'Ansha l'avait établie" (55) [the absolute monarchy that Ansha had established]; "Hamid lui-même subissait la royauté qu'il avait créée" (55) [Hamid himself was subjected to the sovereignty that he had created]. A portrait is drawn of Ansha as possessed of both property and perspicacity. The owner of the majority of titles of Hamid's property, as well as a good business sense and "une forte tête" (51) [a great brain], Ansha's concern is to protect her authority and the narrator attributes to her an astute and correct assessment of the threat that Emina poses. The innocent Emina, on the other hand, is no match for Ansha; she fails to understand the difficulty of her position, mistaking for amorous jealousy what is instead concern for the maintenance of Ansha's authority. The plot, then, turns on Ansha's own plotting against Emina in order to ensure that her monarchy is not toppled.

If Belgiojoso seems to create a strong female character in Ansha, it is also the case that hers remains an unenlightened sovereignty. Belgiojoso introduces situations and characters in order to editorialize about Ottoman practices; she uses the occasion of Emina's marriage to provide an extended eye-witness description of wedding rituals, which she finds "barbarous."

55 Booth, "Introduction," in *Harem Histories*, 6.

When Hamid-Bey is wounded and subsequently falls ill, Ansha suspects his condition is the result of Emina's herbal remedies, and calls in an imam to perform an exorcism. In keeping with her unwavering condemnation of Islam, Belgiojoso takes the occasion to characterize local medical practices as driven by a mixture of superstition, greed, and gluttony, and the figure of the imam provides Belgiojoso with the narrative justification to characterize and condemn these medical practices as inseparable from religious practices as well. Emina's own care of her husband costs her her health, and it is here that Belgiojoso makes her providential appearance. Emina tells her:

> J'ai entendu dire que les Francs pensaient autrement que nous à ce sujet et qu'ils savaient avec certitude les choses de l'autre vie. On m'a dit aussi que selon eux les femmes étaient admises dans les jardins des fidèles, et voilà pourquoi j'ai tant prié Dieu de m'envoyer quelqu'un de cette nation bienheureuse qui possède une certitude si rassurante, et Dieu m'a exaucée. Ah! qu'il est bon! Et que je l'aime! –Comment donc as-tu fait pour venir jusqu'à ce village où nul voyageur ne passe jamais? Je suis sûre qu'hier encore tu ne comptais pas t'arrêter ici, mais c'est Dieu que t'a amenée vers moi. Chère soeur, chère amie, à présent que je t'ai dit tout, parle à ton tour, éclaire-moi. (130)
>
> [I've heard that the Franks think differently about this and that they know with certainty about the other life. I have also heard that, according to them, women are admitted to the gardens of the faithful, and that's why I have prayed to God so much that he send me someone from that fortunate country who possesses such a reassuring certainty, and God has heard my prayer. Ah, how good He is! And how I love Him! How did it happen that you arrived in this village, where no travelers ever pass by? I'm certain that even yesterday, you had no thought of stopping here, but it is God who has brought you to me. Dear sister, dear friend, now that I have told you the whole story, enlighten me.]

If Emina is Belgiojoso's God-given destination, Belgiojoso and the "illumination" she offers are also in some sense the destination of the tale itself. Able to cure diseases by consulting her personal pharmacy of herbs, Emina also seems at the outset to be a double of Belgiojoso herself, who was known in the villages surrounding her farm as a healer and who had acquired a certain medical expertise thanks to notions learned through her superintendence of hospitals during the Roman Republic and her familiarity with doctors and

medicine due to her own health problems.[56] In fact, when Belgiojoso makes her appearance toward the end of the tale, it is as doctor to Emina herself:

> Je m'assis auprès d'elle; elle me prit la main avec vivacité et la garda. Je fixai mes yeux sur elle avec une attention douloureuse. Elle comprit, à la façon dont je la regardais et dont son mari me regardait à son tour comme pour lire dans ma pensée, qu'il s'agissait de sa santé. – Oh! fit-elle, docteur! … – Le lecteur peut rire, et je l'y autorise de grand coeur; mais rien ne prête moins à la plaisanterie en Orient qu'une femme exerçant la médecine, et dans les villes de l'intérieur ce sont toujours des femmes greques ou arméniennes qui ont la clientele des harems. A Constantinople aussi, dans le palais même du sultan et malgré ses docteurs attitrés, ce fut une femme médecin comme moi, et peut-être un peu moins que moi, que eut naguère l'insigne honneur d'arracher la sultane mère à une mort qui paraissait inévitable. (128)
>
> [I sat next to her, and she eagerly took my hand and held it. I fixed my gaze on her with painful attention. By the way that I looked at her, and the way her husband looked at me in turn, as if to read my thoughts, she understand that her health was at stake. "Oh!" she said, "Doctor!' The reader may laugh, and I heartily authorize him to do so, but nothing is less ridiculous in the Orient than a woman who practices medicine, and in the internal cities it is always Greek and Armenian women who treat the clientele of the harem. In Constantinople, too, and even in the palace of the sultan, and notwithstanding his official doctors, it was a female doctor like me, and maybe even a little less than me, who not long ago had the signal honor of wresting the sultan's mother from a death that seemed inevitable.]

If the female doctor of the Sultan could wrest his mother from death, even as a doctor lesser than Belgiojoso, it should not come as a surprise that Belgiojoso wrests Emina's soul from perdition, cooking up a catechism fitting for an occupant of the harem and stopping just short of performing a baptism herself, recalling Chateaubriand's *Atala*: "Je crois que, si je l'avais voulu, j'aurais pu assister à une reproduction de la scène du baptême d'Atala (138) [if I had so desired, I could have participated in a repetition of the scene of

56 Giorcelli, "L'Orientalismo di Cristina di Belgiojoso," 104.

Atala's baptism]. Emina dies happy in the knowledge that the doors of heaven are open to her, and Belgiojoso explains to Hamid that the real culprit was not Ansha but "vos lois sur le mariage" (139) [your laws concerning marriage]. As was the case for the ending of *La vie intime*, Belgiojoso is careful to salvage the character of the Turks so as to ensure the possibility of conversion, even as she condemns theirs as a "false civilization." Here the "le Turc" that is Hamid-Bey is carefully defined as "l'oeuvre d'une fausse civilisation aux prises avec l'homme de la nature" (139) [the work of a false civilization upon the man of nature]. The false civilization triumphs in the case of natural man, however, as Hamid does not follow Emina's lead.

A close call with conversion is also the point of arrival of "Un prince kurde", in which a political struggle between a leader of the Kurds and the Sublime Porte furnishes the background for what begins as yet another harem tale. As it opens, the story introduces us to the occupants of the harem of Mehemed-Bey, each of whose first four wives represents a specific and characteristic ethnicity in representations of the Ottoman harem: Fatma, the first wife whom we assume to be, like her husband, Kurdish, followed by the stereotypically beautiful Georgian, Actié, the equally beautiful Circassian, Kadja, and the black Senegalese, Abrama.[57] The fifth wife, Habibé, is a woman of initially unknown origin, who speaks Turkish badly and whose introduction into the harem produces both the domestic disequilibrium that spurs the narration and an irregularity that sparks the first of several ethnographic footnotes on Belgiojoso's part. Observing that Muslim law limits the number of legitimate wives to four, she adds that the number can in fact be increased given that every concubine who produces a son is, by that fact, elevated to the rank of legitimate spouse; she speculates that Abrama likely passed from the status of slave to that of wife in this way. The mystery of Habibé's identity will later be solved, when it will be revealed that she is the Christian daughter of a Danish diplomat and an Armenian mother, taken prisoner by "Gypsies." But the plot is driven by a second disequilibrium as well, one that disrupts what is presented, at the story's opening, as the long-standing tolerance of Kurdish brigandage by the Porte. When a new pasha takes office in Mehemed-Bey's province, he mounts a campaign with the Porte to punish this "population puissante et belliqueuse … dont l'existence habituelle et normale se compose d'agressions à main armée, de combats et de pillage" (153) [bellicose and powerful population … whose normal and habitual existence is made up of

57 As with the case of the transliteration "Mahomet" used by Finati, I have retained Belgiojoso's French twist on the Kurdish "Mehemed" as the name of her character.

armed aggression, combat and pillage]. Thinking that a new situation has arisen, rather than simply a new source of complaint, the Porte reasons that, though not all Kurds are brigands, they are all shepherds; a decree thus goes out that the traditional summer pasturage in the mountains that had been the Kurd's right and way of life for centuries is now prohibited. In response, a division of opinion among the Kurds themselves leads to an official acceptance of the new prohibition, led by the venerable Hassan-Effendi, accompanied by a decision to "se venger sournoisement et sans bruit" [take vengeance surreptitiously and quietly], led by Mehemed-Bey himself. In preparation for the retaliation that will come from Constantinople, Mehemed-Bey disperses his wives, sending them to stay in safe havens with friends and relatives; now no longer a "curieux tableau d'intérieur musulman" (145) [curious tableau of a Muslim interior] with the harem as its setting, the story expands into a tale of disguise, intrigue, and adventure, focusing on Mehemed-Bey and Habibé as its representatives of two already mixed and marginal identities, the Kurdish Muslim on the one hand and the Danish–Armenian Christian on the other.

When Mehemed dispatches his wives he offers Habibé first choice of venue and, much to his surprise, she insists on accompanying the Circassian, Kadja, rather than be placed by herself as might have been expected, given the distance she has kept from the other wives. It is soon revealed that, in collaboration with the authorities, Kadja is plotting against Mehemed-Bey in order to gain her freedom from the man she calls a tyrant, while Habibé has in fact fallen in love with the man she calls her captor, and so had knowingly kept Kadja under her surveillance. The point of this twist is not to suggest that Habibé is a victim of Stockholm syndrome, avant la lettre, but to focus on the psychological dilemmas experienced by both Habibé and Mehemed-Bey. When Mehemed-Bey is taken prisoner by the Turks Habibé accompanies him; both then manage to escape in a landscape that does evoke the tradition of "Enlightenment Orientalism": the earth beneath the mountainous territory is filled with caverns, entry to which is possible through hollowed tree trunks equipped with ropes and secret doors. The caverns themselves are well-stocked with foodstuffs and ventilation has been ensured, and it is here that Habibé settles in to tell her own story, in which Mehemed plays the role both of liberator from the "Gypsies" who had stolen her and new captor: "Tu entendis mes cris, tu eus pitié de moi, et tu accomplis ce qui te semblait ma délivrance; mais la liberté que tu croyais me rendre était elle-même un terrible esclavage … " (212) [You heard my cries, you took pity on me, and you accomplished what seemed to you to be my liberation; but the liberty that you thought you were restoring was itself an awful enslavement …] Misunderstandings ensue,

as Habibé declares that, as a Christian woman, any relation she has with a man without her father's approval is a sin she must expiate before God; that her marriage with an infidel before a minister of a "fausse religion" (212) [false religion] is null; she concludes, confusingly for Mehemed as for the reader, that she is there with him of her own free will. When Mehemed immediately offers to free her, deliver her to the soldiers who seek them, ask them to escort her to Constantinople, and place her under the protection of her ambassador Habibé refuses the offer, insisting that she remain with him, since otherwise his hiding place would be revealed. Mehemed is baffled. Here the narrator intervenes, explicitly attributing the cause of the misunderstanding to gender:

> Si Méhémed-Bey eût eu la moindre connaissance du cœur des femmes, il se fût hâté d'accepter l'issue qu'Habibé lui ouvrait pour sortir d'une situation aussi embarrassante que pénible pour tous les deux. Habibé, la pauvre enfant, consentait à ne pas le quitter, parce qu'elle croyait son départ incompatible avec le salut du bey, et la pensée de ses dangers faisait taire la voix de ses propres remords. Regrettait-elle cette nécessité ? C'était ce qu'il ne fallait pas lui demander et ce qu'elle évitait de se demander à elle-même. Mais le bey était un homme de guerre, ne connaissant des femmes que leur enveloppe extérieure et quelques caprices. (213–14)
>
> [If Mehemed Bey had had the slightest knowledge of women's hearts, he would have hastened to accept the way that Habibé offered him to get out of a situation that was equally embarrassing and painful for both of them. Habibé, poor child, agreed not to leave him because she believed her departure to be incompatible with the safety of the bey, and the thought of these dangers silenced the voice of her own remorse. Did she regret this necessity? That is what one must not ask her, and what she avoided asking herself. But the bey was a man of war, who knew of women only their external envelope and passing fancies.]

When Mehemed argues that her sudden appearance in the forest would give the soldiers no greater knowledge of his whereabouts than they already suspected, Habibé finds herself reasoned into a corner; the only logical exit would be to confess her love to Mehemed:

> Tout cela était fort bien raisonné; si bien, qu'Habibé ne trouva rien à y répondre. Elle ne pouvait plus expliquer son refus de partir qu'en avouant sa répugnance à le laisser dans une situation aussi périlleuse, et c'eût été

avouer qu'elle lui portait un intérêt tout particulier. Triste, embarrassée et mécontente d'elle-même, Habibé fit ce que les femmes font, hélas ! trop souvent. Elle tourna son mécontentement contre celui qui en était la cause, mais la cause innocente et involontaire. (214–15)

[All of this was very well argued – so well, that Habibé could find no reply. She could no longer explain her refusal to leave except by confessing her repugnance to leaving him in such a dangerous situation, and that would have been tantamount to confessing that she bore for him a special interest. Sad, embarrassed and discontent with herself, Habibé did what women do, alas, too often. She turned her discontentment against the one who was its cause, but the innocent and involuntary cause.]

The logic of what we would now call "the clash of civilizations" would lead readers to expect that the source of Habibé's difficulty in avowing her love to Mehemed would be attributed to the difference of their religions, but the narrator here pointedly suggests that the source of misunderstanding is to be attributed to their genders; Habibé does what women are wont to do, so says the narrator, turning her discontent with herself into discontent with Mehemed. She consequently dissimulates, misrepresenting her own motivations and accusing him of abandoning her when in fact she had seemed to ask to be freed, and that is his intention. It is within this framework that the following exchange between Mehemed and Habibé must be read:

– Et pourtant tu ne me donnes pas la main, et au moment de nous séparer pour toujours, tu me refuses jusqu'à ce léger témoignage de bienveillance. Je ne te comprends pas, ma bien-aimée; mais cela tient sans doute à la différence de nos mœurs et de notre foi.
– Oui, sans doute, reprit Habibé, qui ne pouvait plus contenir son mécontentement; les idées et les sentiments d'un Kurde diffèrent si complétement de ceux d'une chrétienne, que nous ne parviendrons jamais à nous entendre. Dans mon pays, par exemple, un homme qui abandonnerait au milieu d'une forêt, à la merci de soldats grossiers et brutaux, une femme à laquelle il a donné le nom d'épouse et qu'il a prétendu aimer, un pareil homme serait regardé comme … comme indigne de toute sympathie, de toute confiance, de tout … . (216–17)

[–And yet you do not give me your hand and, in the moment in which we leave each other forever, you refuse even this slight show of benevolence.

> I do not understand you, my beloved, but perhaps that derives from the difference of our customs and of our faith.
>
> –Yes, perhaps – replied Habibé, who could no longer hold back her discontentment – the ideas and sentiments of a Kurd differ so radically from those of a Christian that we will never succeed in understanding each other. In my country, for example, a man who would abandon a woman to whom he had given the name of wife and had claimed to love in the middle of the woods, and to the mercy of crude and brutal soldiers, such a man would be regarded as … as unworthy of all sympathy, of all faith, of all … .]

Mehemed has no such intention, of course, and the reader knows that Habibé is twisting his words and misrepresenting the situation, all to dissimulate her own true feelings. Underscoring discontentment as the source of Habibé's unfair accusation of Mehemed, the narrator frames Habibé's deployment of the "clash of civilizations" argument as yet another strategy of dissimulation, rather than as a truth to be embraced and an explanation of why it is that Mehemed cannot grasp her logic. Cultural differences are bracketed by gender, with Habibé made to be the spokesperson for a discourse that the narrator discredits. When Habibé will later opine that Turks consider women to be objects that must be handled gently so as not to damage them, but without granting them esteem or trust, concluding that "Méhémed est un Turc comme les autres" (228) [Mehemed is a Turk like all the rest], she directly contradicts not only the implications of Mehemed's actions within the diegesis but also the narrator's explicit declaration that "enfin Méhémed-Bey était Kurde et non Turc, ce qui n'est pas du tout la même chose" (160) [Mehemed was a Kurd and not a Turk, which is not at all the same thing]. The narrator's distinction between "Kurd" and "Turk" is in keeping with Belgiojoso's tendency to find differentiation where her Orientalist predecessors had found homogeneity, and to recognize both class and ethnic diversity. It is also in keeping with her tendency to separate individual character from Muslim religious and social norms, so as to find in it fertile terrain for eventual conversion to Christian religious and social norms. In this way, the "clash of civilizations" comes to be staged as an internal and intimate struggle, taking place within the potentially malleable character of an individual, rather than between the much more rigid characters of nations and empires.

As we have seen, then, in both of these tales that internal struggle takes place within the male, Muslim character, who finds himself drawn by love

to a Christian female character – Christian by birth in the case of Habibé and crypto-Christian in the case of Emina. Both Habibé and Emina are given the kind of civilizing role Belgiojoso elsewhere attributes to women in relation to the formation of national character, yet neither is fully successful in bringing about the desired conversion of her Muslim husband. It is here that Belgiojoso's appearance at the end of each tale takes on a function that is not only narratological but ideological as well; not only does her first person intervention signal an exit from the realm of fiction and an entry into that of ethnography, it also reflects the necessity for the intervention of an external agent for the purposes of political and religious reforms.

The Violence of Enlightenment

Here we may return to the closing section of *La vie intime*, where Belgiojoso offers her ruminations on what is to be done to modernize the Ottoman empire and capitalize not only upon its natural resources but also upon the "éléments d'une meilleure vie morale" (232) [elements of a better moral life] that she has found present in the Turkish character. Reforms already attempted have failed, she argues, because they were limited to lowering the barrier between Muslim Asia and Christian Europe through the elimination of restrictions placed on Christian subjects of the Ottoman empire. Such a reform, however politically necessary, could only irritate the sensibilities of "zélés musulmans" (234) [Muslim zealots], for "une réforme politique ne sera jamais agréée par un peuple si profondément croyant, si elle n'est appuyée sur une réforme religieuse" (234) [a political reform will never be accepted by a people who believe so profoundly if it does not rest upon a religious reform]. Belgiojoso calls upon Muslims to take the sixteenth-century European reformation as their model, and foment dissent:

> Le christianisme a eu aussi au XVIe siècle ses réformateurs. Que firent-ils? Ils s'addressèrent aux consciences les plus délicates, aux esprits les plus exaltés en matière de religion; les tièdes seraient demeurés neutres dans cette grande question. Les chrétiens zélés s'en préoccupèrent et se rangèrent sous l'une ou l'autre bannière. Pourquoi n'en serait-il pas de même en Orient? (234)
>
> [Christianity, too, had its reformers in the sixteenth century. What did they do? They addressed themselves to the most delicate consciences, to

> the most exalted minds in religious matters; lukewarm minds would have remained neutral on this great question. Zealous Christians took note, and rallied under one or the other banner. Why should it not be the same in the Orient?]

Rather than find religious zeal to be the obstacle to reform, as we might expect given the stereotype of the Muslim as religious zealot, Belgiojoso finds it to be the source and motor of change. And rather than siding with either Protestants or Catholics, as we might also expect, given Belgiojoso's own faith, it is dissent itself that she recommends. At first one wonders whether she has in mind exploiting the schism between Sunni and Shia, but as one reads further it becomes clear that what she envisions instead is a kind of stealth Christianity, and hence a dissent introduced from without Islam:

> Que sans prononcer le nom du Christ, ils les initient aux doctrines civilisatrices et à la morale du christianisme; qu'en se disant les commentateurs du Koran, ils en modifient profondément les principes et les commandements. (235)

> [Without pronouncing the name of Christ, may they initiate them into the civilizing doctrines and morals of Christianity; while calling themselves commentators of the Qur'an, may they profoundly modify its principles and commandments.]

Belgiojoso does not give us a concrete example of who might play the role of such a double agent, although it is tempting to see the two tales we have examined as exercises in imagining a kind of infiltration by a "Christian" into the Muslim world figured by the harem, in which the civilizing role of the female figures stands in as just this sort of stealth initiation. In any case, Belgiojoso's conclusion brings about a startling revolution that is both theological and cosmological:

> Qu'au nom de ce même pouvoir et de ce même principe qui transformèrent jadis les Osmanlis en soldats, ils en fassent aujourd'hui des hommes. Qu'ils renversent et foulent aux pieds la fatale barrière qui sépare l'Orient de la civilisation, qu'ils enseignent à leur people à se tourner vers l'Occident lorsqu'il dit ses prières, car c'est de ce côté que le soleil se lève et se lèvera désormais. (235)

> [In the name of that same power and that same principle that in the past transformed the Ottomans into soldiers, may they today make them men. May they overturn and trample upon the fatal barrier that separates the Orient from civilization, may they teach their people to turn toward the West when they say their prayers, for it is from this side that the sun rises and will rise from now on.]

The audacity of this move takes one's breath away, and not only because of the changes necessary to the solar system in order to accomplish it. It directly evokes the tradition of the *Christus Oriens* that drew upon solar theologies that preceded early Christianity."[58] As Ernst Kantorowicz has documented, a relationship was established between "Oriens," the sun-god whose name evoked both the sunrise and the east, and the cult of emperors who were thus represented as "ever-rising" and "ever-unconquered."[59] This was the tradition of the "Oriens Augusti" in Roman culture, where the ambiguity of reference of "oriens" seems to have been deliberately played upon, referring to rule over the East as well as to the cult of Mithras. Kantorowicz writes that "this terminology, needless to say, did not originate on the banks of the Tiber or Thames. It emerged from the ancient Near East, penetrated into the Hellenistic kingdoms as well as into the Roman empire, and finally conquered the Christian Church as well." ("Oriens Augusti," 131) It made its way to the early Church fathers, such as Origen and Tertullian; Kantorowicz cites a passage from Origen that speaks directly to Belgiojoso's theological and cosmological revolution: "He, Christ, is the man whose name is Orient, who has been made the mediator between God and men … everyone who, in one way or another, receives the name of Christ, becomes also a son of the Orient. For so it is written about Christ: 'Behold a man, the Orient is his name.'" ("Oriens Augusti," 138). Origen concludes "that the faithful should turn at prayers to the East from where the Sun of Righteousness ever rises and there the true light is born" ("Oriens Augusti," 138). The connection to resurrection and baptism is implicit within the figuring of Christ as a sun that never sets, "qui nescit occasum" or "sine occasu," reminding us as well of the meaning of "occident" as "setting, going down." It is difficult to imagine that Belgiojoso was unaware of the theological tradition and of the wrenching that her proposal introduces into it. By substituting "civilization" for a Christ

58 I am grateful to Albert R. Ascoli for bringing this connection to my attention.

59 Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "Oriens Augusti. Lever du Roi," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963): 117–77.

whose name should not be pronounced, Belgiojoso has introduced a secularization into what is represented as a religious reform. The light of "enlightened" Western civilization is now the true "sun god," and by implication has outshone a Christ whose time has perhaps "set." Belgiojoso has done nothing less than rewrite Origen, as though she were saying: "Everyone who, in one way or another, receives the name of enlightened civilization, becomes also a son of the Occident. For so it is written about the enlightened ones: 'Behold a man, the Occident is his name.'" This, then, is no mere religious reform, but rather a vision of the wholesale annihilation of a religion; as such, it brings to light the violent side of the dialectic of enlightenment of Belgiojoso's Orientalism.

CHAPTER THREE

Male Masquerade in Mecca: Passing and Posing in Nineteenth-Century Egypt

> "We came to find new things," I answered boldly. "We are tired of the old things; we have come up out of the sea to know that which is unknown. We are of a brave race who fear not death, my very much respected father – that is, if we can get a little fresh information before we die."
>
> H. Rider Haggard, *She* (78)

If the harem was the forbidden space that authorized a female Orientalism, Mecca is the forbidden space that becomes the site of a masquerade on the part of a handful of European male Orientalists. In this chapter we will look at the topoi of passing and posing as Muslim in nineteenth-century Egypt in the memoirs of several European male travelers whose national belonging was riven, whether by force or choice. Leaving aside the discursive mode of the picturesque and its feminine connotations, as well as projects of social and religious reform, these travelers are practitioners of an ideology of adventure, and the real-life precursors of the kinds of hero who will later populate H. Rider Haggard's imperial fictions.[1] Like those heroes, they are on a quest for a "little fresh information" before they die, and most especially about the sacred spaces forbidden to Christians upon threat of death, the Meccan and Medina Harams (or "holy places").[2] Although only one of our writers

1 H. Rider Haggard (1856–1925) is best known for his adventure novels *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887); Freud famously takes up the latter as embodying "the eternal feminine" in the *Interpretation of Dreams*. See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953) (rpt. 1986), Vol. V, 453.

2 The "Haram" is an open space, defined by porticoes, which houses the Ka'ba, or Cube, the "sacred house" whose foundation was understood to have been laid by the

was born in the British Isles, all four published their accounts in English, a fact which underlines the dominant role played by Great Britain in the distribution and consumption of such narratives throughout the nineteenth century, and which, as Aamir R. Mufti has recently argued, is symptomatic of the role of the English language in mediating world literary relations through Orientalism itself.[3] Our three non-British adventurers, John Lewis Burckhardt (1784–1817), Giovanni Belzoni (1778–1824), and Giovanni Finati (1787–date unknown) were contemporaries of Amalia Nizzoli; they similarly owed the impetus of their migration to the arrival of the Napoleonic army to their respective countries of origin and similarly experienced, indeed profited from, the fluidity of national identities that characterized Muhammad Alì's Egypt. Finati and Belzoni were born on the Italian peninsula, while Burckhardt grew up in Switzerland; they appear in each other's narratives, their itineraries overlap and intersect, and their national and religious affiliations drift along with their migrations.[4] Burckhardt and Finati both converted to Islam and passed as Muslim throughout their lives as travelers in Egypt and the Middle East: Burckhardt strategically so, Finati rather more accidentally. Belzoni adopted local dress as a practical measure, but his conversion remained merely sartorial. All three published their accounts in English with the aid of editors and translators, and were thus better known to British Orientalists, and to an English readership, than in their countries of origin. We will therefore juxtapose their narratives against that of the much better-known figure of Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890), who, like his predecessors Finati and Burckhardt, made the pilgrimage to Mecca. For Burton, however, it was a point of pride that he entered Mecca not as a renegade but in a disguise – physical, linguistic, cultural, and semiotic – so successful, he

patriarch Abraham, "on a site already hallowed by Adam." See F. E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7. It is, for Islam, the center of the world, and points to the *qiblah*, the direction toward which Muslims turn in prayer. A useful reference work on Islam in Italian is Massimo Campanini, ed., *Dizionario dell'Islam* (Milan: Bur, 2005).

3 See Mufti, *Forget English!*

4 Debra Manley and Peter Rée provide the most comprehensive account of the overlapping itineraries of this group of Europeans, and in particular of the Anglo-French rivalry over antiquities, in their biography of Henry Salt, *Henry Salt: Artist, Traveller, Diplomat, Egyptologist* (London: Libri Publications, 2001). Manley and Rée coordinate and reconcile the often conflicting accounts of the various players, including Finati, Belzoni, Salt, Burckhardt, the Piedmontese Bernardino Drovetti, Leonard Irby and Charles Mangles, and others.

claimed, that his identity as an infidel was undetected by his fellow pilgrims. Burton, we will say, posed rather than passed; one of our principal concerns will be to theorize the nature of this cross-cultural "passing" and "posing," in relation to the national identities in question.

I owe the pair of terms "passing" and "posing" to film scholar Linda Williams's work on a very different historical context, that of the early twentieth century in the US, in *Playing the Race Card*. In her chapter "Posing as Black, Passing as White," Williams contrasts the 1927 film *The Jazz Singer* and the 1927 musical *Show Boat*, arguing that "where whites who pose as black intentionally exhibit all the artifice of their performance – exaggerated gestures, blackface make-up – blacks who pass as white suppress the obvious artifice of performance. Passing is a performance whose success depends on not overacting."[5] Another way to put this might be to say that, in the scenario Williams describes, those who pose simulate something that they are not, whereas those who pass dissimulate something that they are; those who pose insist on exhibiting their distinction and distance, often theatrically so, from a stigmatized identity, whereas those who pass cover over both their distinction from an identity that confers privilege and their efforts to do so. Yet already in the case of *The Jazz Singer*, Williams shows that things are more complicated than this. *The Jazz Singer* provides not simply an example of a black/white binary but a case of an "explicit performance of Jewishness against a foil of blackness mediated by Irishness" (Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 141). Building on Michael Rogin's argument that blackface "became a means of white-washing the assimilating Jew," and that therefore "posing as black is ultimately a way to pass as white" (Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 141), Williams argues that the film turned recently emigrated, assimilating Jews into objects of sympathy by associating them with "the by now thoroughly conventionalized afflictions of slaves" (Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 148). The result is to attach "racial pathos" to more recent narratives of assimilation, as well as to allow the Jew to pass as white. I propose to "migrate" these reflections to several cases of European men who enter Mecca in disguise in order better to explore the intricacies of national belongings and the driftings that take place among handfuls of Europeans in early nineteenth-century Egypt. As I have intimated, these cases differ in relation to the identity that is deemed to be the stigmatized one and which the privileged one, according to shifting contexts. I will argue that Finati covers, and ultimately erases, his

5 Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 176.

distinction from a Muslim identity that is deemed to confer privilege, in his case an Albanian and Ottoman one; that Burckhardt both passes as Muslim and, owing to assumptions on the part of his Ottoman hosts, poses as British; and that the theatricality of Burton's pose as Muslim serves, instead, to exhibit his distance from a Muslim identity that is deemed the stigmatized one in relation to his British identity.

Giovanni Finati, Hajji Mahomet

The first case is that of Giovanni Finati, the least-known of the four, though by no means entirely unknown in the Orientalist field. Richard F. Burton, for example, intensely competitive when it came to previous descriptions of Mecca by Europeans, cross-references and condescendingly corrects Finati, whom he dubs "our Italian Candide." In his appendix to his *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Medinah and Meccah*, Burton includes Finati's description of Mecca alongside the much earlier Italian account, Ludovico de Varthema's 1510 *Itinerario*, as among the first we have from Europeans in the modern era.[6] We will have more to say later about Burton's relation to Finati. For the moment, we will note that Finati's narrative did not enjoy the kind of popular reception that both Belzoni's and Burton's did, nor did he possess the erudition that would warrant recognition as a learned Orientalist, as both Burton and Burckhardt surely did. An accidental Orientalist, Finati nonetheless provides a compelling account of transnational mobility and the vicissitudes of "turning Turk," as well as a rousing tale of adventures worthy of later genre fiction, such as that of H. Rider Haggard or, closer to his original home, Emilio Salgari.

In a reversal of a form of co-authorship that anticipates that of the first wave of contemporary migrant writers in Italy who told their life stories to native Italian speakers, Finati dictated his life story in Italian to an unidentified collaborator in Great Britain.[7] It was subsequently translated into English by his one-time employer, William Bankes (1786–1855), an

6 See F. E. Peters' chapter "Through European Eyes: Holy City and Hajj in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Hajj*, 206–65, for a compendium of nineteenth-century descriptions in English.

7 I am thinking, for example, of Nassera Chora's *Volevo diventare bianca*, co-written with Alessandra Atti di Sarro (Rome: Edizioni E/O, 1993); Pap Khouma, *Io, venditore di elefanti*, co-written with Oreste Pivetta (Milan: Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 1990), and Salah Methnani, *Immigrato*, co-written with Mario Fortunato (Rome: Theoria, 1990).

epigraphist, archeologist, and accomplished amateur artist who employed Finati as interpreter and janissary during his voyage to Egypt and Syria in 1815–1816. In his preface to Finati's narrative Bankes explains the reason for the expedient of dictation:

> His long disuse, however, of European writing (an accomplishment in which he had, perhaps, never been a brilliant proficient) had made him very slow with the pen, and rendered it probable that he would soon abandon the attempt, if he took the whole labour upon himself, which was my motive that he should rather dictate, than endeavour to put his story to paper with his own hand.[8]

Bankes's translation appeared in 1830 under the wonderfully expansive nineteenth-century title *The Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Giovanni Finati, Native of Ferrara Who, under the Assumed Name of Mahomet Made the Campaigns of the Wahabees for the Recovery of Mecca and Medina and Since Acted as Interpreter to European Travellers in Some of the Parts Least Visited of Asia and Africa, Translated from the Italian, As Dictated by Himself, and edited by William John Bankes, Esq*. This was the only publication to appear under Bankes's name, a curious fact given that such accounts seem to have been *de rigeur* for upper-class British travelers to Egypt in this period. Bankes, however, seems to have suffered from writer's block, to judge from a letter he wrote in 1822 to his Cambridge chum Lord Byron, in which he blames his procrastination on a "strange mix of indolence and industry."[9] One

8 Finati, *Narrative*, xiii. Finati's narrative has not been the object of scholarly study for its own sake, but rather for the information it provides about William Bankes. See, for example, Norman N. Lewis, Annie Sartre-Fauriat, and Maurice Sartre, "William John Bankes: Travaux en Syrie d'un voyageur oublié," *Syria* 73, Fasc. 1/4 (1996): 57–95. An Italian translation of Finati's narrative was published by Michele Visani in 1941, under the title *Vita e avventure di Giovanni Finati*. Visani searched in vain for what Bankes tells us were the original 12 notebooks dictated in Italian by Finati and translated by Bankes; nor was he able to locate the original English manuscript. In their 1996 article Lewis et al. report instead that a manuscript of the first volume of the book is to be found in the Bankes collection held in the County Record Office in Dorchester; the second half, they speculate, has been lost. See Lewis et al., "William John Bankes," 58.

9 Lewis et al. refer to a January 2nd letter to Lord Byron, held in the archive of the publisher John Murray, citing it in French (Lewis et al., "William John Bankes," 59); Patricia Ursick reports that Bankes writes of publishing: "I am always thinking of it and from a strange mixture of indolence with industry always deferring it. I hate, and always did, method and arrangement, and this is what my materials want." She draws the

might speculate that Finati's narrative gave Bankes the occasion he craved to show off his own Orientalist credentials; in the editor's preface he notes that he has given Finati's "geographical recollections, in those countries we traversed together, the full benefit of a collation with my journals made on the spot" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, xvii), and the footnotes Bankes added also collate Finati's recollections with those of Burckhardt's 1822 *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, the Frenchman Félix Mengin's 1823 *Histoire de l'Egypte sous le gouvernement de Mohammed Aly*, and the Spaniard Ali Bey's 1816 *Travels of Ali Bey in Morocco, Tripoli, Cyprus, Egypt, Arabia, Syria, and Turkey, between the years 1803 and 1807*. Finati's tales of adventure are thus given a scholarly cast that might justify Bankes's claim that they

> can hardly fail to prove entertaining, even to the general reader, but will have yet higher value to those who are curious in oriental manners, and in modern oriental history, as containing some details nowhere else to be met with, at least in our language, and on the testimony of an eyewitness. (Finati, *Narrative*, I, xviii)

Finati's own narrative, however, is otherwise entirely free of the textual mediation that characterizes those of his more learned fellow-travelers, a fact which may have exempted him from the more egregious stereotypes of Orientalist intertextuality.

In his memoir, Finati recounts how he was conscripted into the Napoleonic army in 1805, and twice deserted: first almost immediately upon conscription, when he returned to Ferrara only to be apprehended and sent to prison, and a second time after he is forced to return to military service and is sent to Albania. Following a perilous sea voyage worthy of a romance plot, he and his fellow deserters, Italians all (including a woman who is whisked away, never to be heard from again), find themselves welcomed by the local pasha, who "liberally supplied [them] with all" that they could want, and "daily invited them to renounce their faith" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 47). The deserters' resolve is unmoveable: "Full as we were at that time of true Italian zeal, these overtures made not the smallest impression upon us; we felt indignant at the very suggestion of renouncing our faith, and encouraged one

conclusion that the second volume of Finati's travels is "virtually a record" of Bankes's travels. See Patricia Ursick, "William John Bankes' Collection of Drawings of Egypt and Nubia," in *Travellers in Egypt*, ed. Paul Starkey and Janet Starkey (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co., 1998), 59.

another reciprocally in a resolution rather to die than to submit to it" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 48). Upon hearing this declaration, the pasha's lavish welcome comes to an end; they are demoted to the status of slaves and set to work in quarries. After three months of hard labor their "Italian zeal" seems to have abated, for they find themselves reciprocally encouraging each other rather differently: "Our country was closed against us," urges a sergeant,

> we had therefore no hope as Christians. The Mahometans believed, as we do, in a God, and upon examination we might find the differences from our mother church to be less than we had imagined, or at the worst, we might still retain our own creed, and put up our prayers in our hearts. (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 52)

To which Finati exclaims: "wonderful what a few bold words will do … we all came at once to the determination of professing to be Mahometans … . We were received as Mussulmen; though I believe that most of us continued in our hearts as good Catholics as we had been before" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 53–54). This particular strategy, in which a still-Christian interiority is assumed to persist and be distinguishable from a merely practical Muslim exteriority, has an institutional history that pre-dates Finati's conversion: as historian Eric R. Dursteler notes, it was

> at the core of an Inquisition manual of 1625, which suggested a leading dialogue for use in interrogating renegades: "At the persuasion of the Turks, and for fear of being mistreated by them, you had externally renounced the Holy Christian Faith, and said expressly that you wanted to be a Turk, lifting the finger … and freely allowing yourself to be circumcised, but retaining from thence onward the Holy Christian Faith in your heart."[10]

In Finati's case, there is a deep irony in this inversion of what, in the contemporary era, we might call a "Jimmy Carter strategy" – they practice Islam, but pray like good Catholics in their hearts – for Finati had never fit the description of a "good Catholic."[11] As a child he had been destined for religious life, and

10 See Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople*, 118. Dursteler in turn draws upon Scaraffia, *Rinnegati*, 101–27.

11 In an infamous 1976 interview in *Playboy* magazine, President Jimmy Carter admitted to having looked upon many women with lust, and therefore to have committed adultery in his heart.

had been instructed, as he puts it, "in all that course of frivolous and empty ceremonies and mysteries, which form a principal feature in the training up of a priest for the Romish church" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 5). He announces quite plainly that he had from an early age felt "the strongest repugnance to that mode of life and to the society and habits of priest and ecclesiasts of all sorts" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 4). To be sure, his British translator was almost certainly the one to supply the locution "Romish church," but Finati underlines his dislike of the institution again several pages later when he admits that, if he disliked the military profession into which he was conscripted, he disliked equally if not more the profession which had been designated for him at home. In any event, there is no further reference to praying in the heart in the two volumes and over 700 pages that follow.

Having embraced Islam Finati takes on the name "Mahomet" and enrolls in Muhammad Ali's Albanian militia. I would mislead you if I were to suggest that Finati-now-Mahomet was much preoccupied with his identity, national or otherwise, in his narrative; he lives a soldier's life for the entire first volume, and his concerns are matters of life and death: lack of water, abundance of scorpions, wells contaminated by the bodies of the dead. However, we learn not only that he is fluent in Albanian and Arabic but that he successfully passes *as* Albanian, and the first person plural pronoun that, in the opening pages, referred to the deserting Italians and their "Italian zeal," quickly morphs into referring to the company of fellow soldiers in the Albanian regiment of Muhammad Ali's army. He does not lack for adventures. Along the way he is an eye-witness to the 1811 massacre of the Mamluks, an event that captured the European imagination equally for its theatricality and its brutality. (In a strategy that one can only call Machiavellian, Muhammad Ali invited all of the Mamluks then present in Cairo to meet with him in the citadel, on the occasion of the investiture of his son, Tussun Pasha, who was to head the army sent to fight the Wahhabis in the Hijaz; the Mamluks were lured with the promise that they would play an important part in that campaign for the redemption of Mecca. Once there, they were trapped and, with only one exception, slaughtered.)[12] He impregnates the wife of an Albanian officer

12 Later in his narrative Finati claims to have seen, once again and at a later moment in his travels, the one Mamluk who escaped. Historical accounts suggest instead that all were slaughtered; historian Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot writes that they were "killed to a man," and cites Muhammad Ali's own report to the sultan as counting among them 24 boys and 40 men, "the ears and heads of whom he sent to the sultan." See Marsot, *Egypt*, 72.

who had granted him entrance to his harem and flees to save himself from a fate felt to be worse than death: circumcision.[13] He takes a slave-girl as plunder and marries her; kills a man whom he discovers, as he is about to make a trophy of his head in order to secure his reward from the pasha, is his innocent friend; and has many a close call in which his life is at risk. Italy is rarely invoked. Indeed, after the episode in which he embraced Islam, I can find only one nostalgic invocation of Italy as "home" in more than 250 pages of the first volume. Starving and unable to find uncontaminated wells, Mahomet finds life to be a "burthen" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 245) and, looking to "better days," he

> felt a longing desire for Italy, which had hardly been present to me as now since I first left it; for my imagination even went so far as to call up the image and the very voice of my father and mother to me, and all my near connexions, and so threw me again into a fresh train of sorrow. (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 245)

13 Upon learning that the beautiful Georgian, Fatima (for that was the name of the young woman), was with child, Finati-Mahomet muses: "turning the matter in my mind it sometimes occurred to me, that the best end that this could come to was, that I should be compelled by the law to marry her, for that is what I should have wished, but then imagination, always making risks and difficulties appear to be greater than they are, made me dread the operation of circumcision, to which I conceived I should, in that case, infallibly be subjected, and which I had hitherto shifted off from me" (p. 60). Finati and his fellow-converts had been spared the circumcision required of Muslims, noting that at the moment of embracing Islam that "the rite of circumcision … was remitted to us for the present, till, by becoming better acquainted with the language, we should be greater proficient in our new form of religion" (p. 54). The dread of circumcision is a topos in accounts of turning Turk, perhaps never so prominent as in the case of Richard F. Burton, who takes the occasion to scoff at Finati for precisely this dread. Of this episode, Burton writes: "But presently the girl proved likely to become a mother – their intercourse was more than suspected – Giovanni Finati had a dread of circumcision, so he came to the felon resolution of flying alone from Scutari." Richard Francis Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah* (London: Ebron Classics, 2006), II, 392. Some biographies suggest that Burton had himself circumcised before undertaking his trip to Arabia; if that is indeed true, it may be that Burton is, characteristically, flaunting his own "courage" in the face of Finati's "felon resolution." Jonathan Bishop traces this information to the first biography of Burton, *A Sketch of the Career of Richard F. Burton*, by Alfred Bates Richards, Andrew Wilson, and St. Clair Baddeley (London, 1886), p. 45. See Bishop's essay "The Identities of Sir Richard Burton: The Explorer as Actor," in *Victorian Studies* 1:2 (1957): 124.

One might speculate that the reason that calling up the image of his family might seem so extreme is not only that, as a deserter, he would face death were he to attempt to return, but, as a *rinnegato*, his own family would likely disown him. Michele Visani, editor of the Italian translation, which bears the much tamer title *Vita e avventure di Giovanni Finati*, draws just this conclusion, assuming that Finati had no further contact with his family for precisely this reason.

Equally as rare are comparisons between the social norms and practices to be found in Europe and those he finds in Egypt. Finati-Mahomet does not automatically assimilate the unknown to the known, nor find what he newly encounters in Egypt to be a deficient version of the old. One exception to this lack of comparison follows his marriage to the slave-girl; a second occurs during his visit at Mecca, and both concern the relation between Catholicism and Islam. This much we might expect from an Orientalizing text; we are reminded of the famous passage in Said's *Orientalism* in which he described the typical form of the Orientalist encounter between East and West: "something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar."[14] From this merges a median category, which is "not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things," and that established view is Christianity for Orientalism, as it is for Finati-Mahomet. The marriage to the slave-girl (who was not only "young and pretty" but "as it happened, did not come empty handed" [Finati, *Narrative*, I, 116]) is short-lived and easily dissolved through divorce, prompting Finati-Mahomet to remark: "Thus easily is this matter disposed of among Mahometans, so soon as the parties become indifferent to one another; and it seems to be perhaps the only mode of preventing those lamentable disorders which abound in countries where matrimony once contracted becomes indissoluble" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 192). Finati-Mahomet hastens to add a disavowal of his enthusiasm for divorce:

> Not that I have any desire to make a panegyric upon Eastern customs or morals, for I know very well that the too great facility with which divorce is there obtained, tends to make wedlock lightly thought of, and engaged in heedlessly, and is attended by many inconveniences: but still, I cannot help thinking, that where divorce is attainable, under certain wholesome

14 Said, *Orientalism*, 58.

> restrictions, it may be of great practical advantage. (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 192–93)

The qualification is remarkable in two respects. First, Finati-Mahomet is not wont to make generalizations about "Eastern" or "Western" customs; the characterization "Eastern" occurs only at one other point in his account, when, in the final pages, he is reunited with one of his former employers, a Frenchman named M. Linant, who joins Finati-Mahomet and Bankes in Wales, "still wearing his Eastern habit, and with his Abyssinian lady" (Finati, *Narrative*, II, 428). It is much more characteristic of Finati-Mahomet to be precise in his designation of national and ethnic identities and practices: there are Albanians, Egyptians, Turks, and Nubians; there are Englishmen, French, Italians; and there is Arab and Turkish dress, and so on. To be sure, the collaboration between Finati-Mahomet and Bankes makes it difficult to attribute responsibility. But the coincidence of the reinstatement of the Orientalist opposition between the "West" and the "East" and the formula of fetishistic disavowal, " I know very well, but all the same ..." makes this "confession" leap out as characteristic of the ambivalence of colonial discourse, but with a twist. Finati-Mahomet's qualification places a knowledge he disavows in relation to a belief he continues to hold, in a way that flies in the face of our expectation that "new information" will be managed by assimilation to the familiar. A typical Saidian "Orientalist," after all, would acknowledge the "difference" of "Eastern custom" while holding on to the belief of the superiority of Western practice, which is to say that the "Eastern difference" would be understood to be the "negative difference" of what is held onto as Western truth, in this case that divorce devalues marriage. Finati-Mahomet, instead, acknowledges the "difference" of "Eastern customs," but holds on to a belief in the superiority of "Eastern practice" in a way that *underlines* the stereotypical nature of the Western "truth" he thereby disavows. In other words, the "truth" that "they" engage heedlessly in marriage, etc., is, in Finati-Mahomet's formulation, underscored as something we always already know: a stereotype that, as Homi Bhabha puts it, "impedes the circulation of the signifier of 'race' as anything other than its *fixity* as racism."[15] In suggesting that this "Western truth" is itself a stereotype, Finati-Mahomet disrupts that fixity and allows for an opening onto an alternative knowledge. The process

15 See Homi Bhabha's theorization of the stereotype in colonial discourse in the chapter "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism," in *The Location of Culture*, 75.

of Finati-Mahomet's subjectivation, his construction as a racialized subject, is as split as the hyphenated surname we have been using to refer to his identity as a convert to Islam.

A second example of this ambivalent subjectivation occurs in the final chapter of the first volume of his narrative, when Finati-Mahomet makes the pilgrimage to Mecca, which he "had so long and ardently been desirous of seeing." Finati-Mahomet has just barely survived a disastrous battle between the Albanian troops and the Wahhabis, who were then blocking pilgrims' access to Mecca, and enters the city alone:

> Exulting in my escape, my mind was in a state to receive very strong impressions, and I was much struck with all that I saw upon entering the city: for though it is neither large, nor beautiful in itself, there is something in it that is calculated to impress a sort of awe, and it was the hour of noon, when every thing is very silent, except the Muezzims calling from the minarets. (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 251)

Finati-Mahomet soon joins the throng of pilgrims and proceeds to describe the physical structures, the "fervor and zeal of the visitants" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 255), and the "superstitions and ceremonies of the place" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 256). Among the latter, Finati-Mahomet describes the opening of the Ka'ba (the *al-Ka'ba*, or "the Cube," the cube-shaped structure that is the holiest building in the world for Muslims), and notes with surprise how rarely anyone actually enters, in spite of his understanding that entrance is supposed to erase all past sins:

> The reason must be sought for in the conditions which are annexed, since he who enters is, in the first place, bound to exercise no gainful trade or pursuit, nor to work for his living in any way whatever; and next he must submit patiently to all offenses and injuries, and must never again touch anything that is impure or unholy. (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 268)

It is likely that Finati-Mahomet's source of this information was not a written text but rather what he hears from fellow pilgrims. He tells us, for example, that his move to Egypt was inspired by "brilliant and high-coloured accounts" that he had heard in Albania (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 66), and never once mentions having obtained his information from books. Unlike the other travelers under examination in this chapter, Finati-Mahomet appears to be exempt from what Said called the "internally structured archive"

(Said, *Orientalism*, 58) that is built up through the accretion of Orientalist intertextuality. To be sure, this earns him the scorn of his more learned counterparts; Burton in particular has little praise for a man who, in his words, "was so ignorant that he had forgotten to write, and his curiosity and his powers of observation keep pace with his knowledge."[16] Burton's response to Finati-Mahomet's "ignorance" is to cross-reference Finati's account of the Ka'ba with those of Ali Bey and Burckhardt, who were familiar with that internally structured archive, and to assume that Finati is wrong. Contemporary scholars follow his lead. F. E. Peters includes the passage cited above in his chapter on the Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca) and the nineteenth century, "Through European Eyes," and characterizes Finati's perspective as "somewhat puzzling"; Peters juxtaposes it to later nineteenth-century accounts that emphasize that one had to pay a monetary fee for admission to the Ka'ba, but do not mention a larger, life-altering price for remission of all sin. Peters thus gives the impression that Finati-Mahomet's account differs greatly on this point from those of other travelers.[17] Burton himself, however, also noted that "all pilgrims do not enter the Ka'abah; and many refuse to do so for religious reasons. Omar Effendi, for instance, who never missed a pilgrimage, had never seen the interior. Those who tread the hallowed floor are bound, among many other things, never again to walk barefooted, to take up fire with the fingers, or to tell lies. Most really conscientious men cannot afford the luxuries of slippers, tongs, and truth" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 211) – to which Burton adds a characteristically flippant footnote: "I have not thought it necessary to go deep into the list of 'Muharramat,' or actions forbidden to the pilgrim who has entered the Ka'abah. They are numerous and meaningless" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 211). This suggests not only that, as William Young cautions, the details of the Hajj are bound both to historical context and to the varied cultural backgrounds of Muslims, but that the meaning attached to this particular bit of "Eastern knowledge" may have carried different weight according to one's relation to Islam. Finati-Mahomet, convert to Islam, did not enter the Ka'ba; Burton, Christian in disguise, did.

16 Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 401.

17 In his analysis of gender and the Ka'ba, William Young cautions that "although the hajj is full of meaning for all Muslims, it is not understood in exactly the same way by Muslims everywhere and at every time. Muslims with different cultural backgrounds inevitably view it differently, and the hajj itself changes over time, at least in some details." See William C. Young, "*The Kaba, Gender, and the Rites of Pilgrimage*," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993): 287.

Burton makes light of the "slippers, tongs, and truth" that entrance might cost the pilgrim, ending the paragraph with a few verses from a thirteenth-century ballad, "Thomas the Rhymer," which tells of a young man taken to Elfland by the Queen of Fairies, who offers him an apple that will give him a "tongue that will never lie" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 211).[18] But Finati-Mahomet, as though anticipating such a condescending response, ends his description with a reference not to Elfland, but to Italy:

> Those who are disposed to smile at such superstitions, may recollect, that the conditions under which a novice enters upon any of the monastic orders in Italy differ little from these, except in being stricter and more binding; yet what numbers are always ready to profess in them! Is this from a greater indifference there to the pleasures of this life, or from a more assured confidence in the reward, or from a more lax interpretation and observance of the vow? I have not myself seen enough of European monasteries to be able to answer this question. (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 269)

If Muslims are superstitious, then Christians are even more so, in the view of Finati-Mahomet, who we know had a low opinion of the "frivolous and empty ceremonies and mysteries" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 5) of the Catholic Church, and who was "born a subject of the pontifical states, at Ferrara" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 3). Indeed, in the last of the explanations that he proffers, Finati-Mahomet entertains the possibility that the Muslims might be more observant, and therefore less frivolous, than the Christians to be found in European monasteries. Burton, who includes excerpts from Finati's *Narrative* as "Appendix VI" of his *Personal Narrative*, devotes a footnote to just this passage (without excerpting the passage itself), as usual "correcting" Finati: "As regards his sneer at the monastic orders in Italy – that the conditions of entering are stricter and more binding than those of the Ka'abah, yet that numbers are ready to profess in them – it must not be imagined that Arab human nature differs materially from Italian" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*,

18 The verses read:

"My tongue is my ain," true Thomas he said;
"A gudely gift ye wad gie to me! *70*
I neither dought to buy or sell
At fair or tryst where I might be.

"I dought neither speak to prince or peer,
Nor ask of grace from fair ladye!" –

II, 399). It is difficult to know precisely how to take this assertion; is Burton asserting a single, universal human nature, or is he in his turn sneering at those Italians, as not so unlike those Arabs? After all, Italy, Egypt, and Asia Minor were all included in the topography of "pederasty" that Burton called the "Sotadic Zone," in the "Terminal Essay" appended to his famous translation of "The Arabian Nights," a zone that emphatically distinguishes between northern and southern Europe in excluding the former from a zone that embraces almost the entire globe.[19] And sneers that connect southern Europeans to the Arab world are not absent from the *Personal Narrative*: for example, in an aside about a "certain Platonic affection" among the Bedouin, Burton writes that

> they draw the line between *amant* and *amoureux*: this is derided by the townspeople, little suspecting how much such a custom says in favour of the wild men. Arabs, like other Orientals, hold that, in such matters, man is saved, not by faith, but by want of faith … . The evil of this system is that they, like certain Southerns – *pensano sempre al male* – always suspect, which may be worldly-wise, and also always show their suspicions, which is assuredly foolish. (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 94–95)

Arabs are here like those "certain Southerns" who happen to speak Italian. We will have more to say about Burton's relation to things Italian in our discussion of his visit to the Ka'ba; for now, the point is that Burton's response to Finati-Mahomet does not so much defend "human" nature as expand the

19 The Sotadic zone had precise co-ordinates, outlined by Burton as follows:
1) There exists what I shall call a "Sotadic Zone," bounded westward by the northern shores of the Mediterranean (N. Lat. 43 degrees) and by the southern (N. Lat. 30 degrees). Thus the depth would be 780 to 800 miles including meridional France, the Iberian peninsula, Italy and Greece, with the coast-regions of Africa from Marocco (*sic*) to Egypt.
2) Running eastward the Sotadic Zone narrows, embracing Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Chaldaea, Sind, the Punjab and Kashmir.
3) In Indo-China the belt begins to broaden, enfolding China, Japan and Turkistan.
4) It then embraces the South Sea Islands and the New World where, at the time of its discovery, Sotadic love was, with some exceptions, an established racial institution.

See Richard Francis Burton, "Terminal Essay," in *A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, Now Entituled The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night with Introduction Explanatory Notes on the Manners and Customs of Moslem Men and a Terminal Essay Upon the History of the Nights* (London: Burton Club, 1886), 10: 206–07. On the myth of a homoerotic Mediterranean, see Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art, and Homosexual Fantasy* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

Orientalist's reach by racializing Italians, whereas Finati-Mahomet appears to be turning the Orientalist's perspective against the Orientalist's own "superstitions."

In the second volume of his narrative, his linguistic abilities, geographical knowledge, and familiarity with Muhammad Ali himself allow Finati-Mahomet (now, having completed the pilgrimage to Mecca, worthy of the title *Hajji*) to leave behind the military life and take up the role of janissary, interpreter, and tour guide. He falls into the service of his future translator William Bankes and of the English Consul Henry Salt; he plays an important role in the explorations of the muscle man turned Egyptologist Giovanni Belzoni, who, in 1820, will publish his own account, entitled *Narrative of the operations and recent discoveries within the pyramids, temples, tombs and excavations in Egypt and Nubia; and of a journey to the coasts of the Red Sea, in search of the ancient Berenice; and another in the oasis of Jupiter Ammon*. Especially important is the year 1817, when Finati-Mahomet accompanies a party "consisting of Mr. Belzoni, Mr. Beechey, Captains Irby and Mangles, Yanni the Greek, an Arab cook belonging to them, and myself" (Finati, *Narrative*, II, 201) to Upper Egypt, and when, on August 1, 1817, Finati-Mahomet became the first person in centuries to enter the newly opened temple of Abu Simbel. (To be sure, it is not Belzoni who credits Finati-Mahomet with this starring role; he neglects to mention that Finati-Mahomet preceded him into the temple, but Finati-Mahomet's claim is backed up by those of others). Given the historic occasion, other members of the party also put pen to paper, among them the above-mentioned Captains Irby and Mangles, who published their own memoir, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria, and Asia Minor During the Years 1817 & 1818*, in 1823.[20] From all of these reports we get the impression that Finati-Mahomet identifies himself fully as Muslim, and we learn that he passes both linguistically (in Albanian and Arabic) and sartorially, indeed, that no one refers to him as an Italian at all, not even "fellow Italians." It is important to remember at this juncture that to be an Albanian in Muhammad Ali's Egypt was to belong to the dominant group; Muhammad Ali himself rose to power from his position as an officer in the Albanian militia and established himself as the leader of a modernizing Egypt. He and his administration were ethnically Turco-Circassian and Albanian, and Muhammad Ali was notorious for not

20 Charles Leonard Irby and James Mangles, Commanders in the Royal Navy, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria, and Asia Minor During the Years 1817 & 1818* (London: Darf Publishers Ltd, 1985).

speaking to his Egyptian subjects in Arabic.[21] Finati thus can be said to dissimulate his own, unstable "Italian" identity, and to successfully pass as the more prestigious identity that grants him both mobility and success in paracolonial Egypt. So successfully does Finati pass that Belzoni refers to him simply to as "Mahomed, a soldier sent to us by Mr. Salt" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 189). The two so-called Italians, Giovanni and Giovanni, meet – indeed, they spend a considerable amount of time in each other's company – but do not greet each other as Italians in Egypt, neither in Finati's nor in Belzoni's narratives. Captains Irby and Mangles do not bother even to refer to Finati-Mahomet as Mahomet, introducing him as the janissary among the servants in the party: "Mr. Beechey's Greek servant, an Arab cook, and a janissary" (Irby and Mangles, *Travels*, 2), and referring to him afterwards as "our janissary" (Irby and Mangles, *Travels*, 9, 13, 24, 102) or simply "the janissary" (Irby and Mangles, *Travels*, 44, 75, 102). The party is entirely reliant upon Finati-Mahomet's linguistic competency, and yet, in spite of the many altercations that dominate the account of the British captains in particular, his role as mediator is almost entirely invisible – except, of course, when it is the cause for complaint of insubordination. Speaking of Finati, Irby and Mangles comment:

> it is a great inconvenience to a traveler in this country that both servants and interpreters always think themselves wiser than their masters; and therefore when desired to say or do any thing, always act according to the dictates of their own judgment, never letting their employer's wishes have the least influence with them. (Irby and Mangles, *Travels*, 103)

Only Mrs. Belzoni, whom Finati-Mahomet accompanied to the Holy Land, seems to be aware that Mahomet might be something other than what he seems; in her *Trifling Account of the Women of Egypt, Nubia, and Syria*, Sarah Belzoni refers to him simply as "Mr. B.'s dragoman" (interpreter), and writes that "Mahomet passed for an Albanian."[22] The knowledge that he passes as Albanian is also knowledge that she knows he is "not" Albanian, but something else: exactly what, however, Mrs. Belzoni does not reveal. It is possible, for example, that she supposed him to be an Arab, since she knew he spoke both Arabic and Albanian.

21 See Marsot, *Egypt*, 109.

22 Sarah Belzoni, "Mrs. Belzoni's Trifling Account of the Women of Egypt, Nubia, and Syria," in Giovanni Belzoni, *Narrative of the Operations*, 310.

Following his stints accompanying Belzoni on his Second Journey and Mrs. Belzoni to the Holy Land, Finati-Mahomet returns to Cairo, where, in his words, "people of all colours and languages seem to be brought together" (Finati, *Narrative*, I, 78), and where he "felt as much as any of them that I was returning to my country, so much have I been accustomed to consider Egypt in that light" (Finati, *Narrative*, II, 54). He frequents, but does not reside in, the Frankish quarter of the city. And in the topos of such accounts that interests us here – the entry into forbidden Muslim space of a Christian in disguise – Finati-Mahomet plays the part of the Muslim accomplice rather than the masquerading infidel. It is spring 1818, and Finati-Mahomet has accompanied Mr. Bankes to the Holy Land. Unbeknownst to Finati-Mahomet, Mr. Bankes nurses a desire to enter the Temple of Solomon, whose entry by a Christian was punishable by death; he must therefore adopt a disguise, and enlists an initially unsuspecting Hajji Mahomet's help. Bankes "sat up in his bed, and after commending my care of him, asked if a handsome new Albanian dress could be bought in the bazaar; I replied that it could, and as I always wore one, naturally conceived that it was intended for myself, so I bought one" (Finati, *Narrative*, II, 281). The dress is for Bankes, as it turns out, and the episode among the most suspense-filled, a stunt designed to thrill participants and readers alike. Finati-Mahomet takes care to explain that "the penalty of the unauthorized entry of *that* mosque by a Christian, is death, and the same to the Mussulman who shall connive at it" (Finati, *Narrative*, II, 285). In fact, Finati-Mahomet worries that he ran a "far greater risk of life than" Mr. Bankes did, for "as a British subject, and a man of substance, they might have threatened, and extorted from" him, "but could hardly have dared to go much further, so that I should have been made the example, who was amenable to their laws, and conversant in their religion and customs" (Finati, *Narrative*, II, 286). No praying in the heart here!

The disguise is both sartorial and linguistic; Albanian dress is necessary to escape visual notice, but even more necessary is Finati-Mahomet's participation as linguistic accomplice. An Albanian, after all, would be supposed to speak Albanian, which Mr. Bankes, of course, does not. He must therefore be a silent Albanian, and concocts the mildly ridiculous yet apparently successful device of feigning a toothache, should he be spoken to. Finati, instead, engages the temple-guardian

> in conversation (in Arabic) that he might not remark on my companion's silence, nor ask him any questions. As we entered, however, seeing him disposed to satisfy his curiosity in that way, I boldly ventured to warn him

> that to a man fresh, as my comrade was, from Scutari, no language but Arnaout could serve. (Finati, *Narrative*, II, 288)[23]

Bankes is lucky; his assumption that "there was no chance at all that the keepers of the mosque would understand Albanian, and no necessity that an Albanian should speak wither Turkish or Arabic (at least with any tolerable accent)" (Finati, *Narrative*, II, 285) turns out to be sound, and the toothache alibi authorizes his silence. That same assumption tells us that Finati-Mahomet spoke Arabic with a "tolerable accent," and that his passing was undetected. Not so Bankes's posing; in the end, he is ratted out by the muleteer, and when the adventure is "known to the Turks, all over the town next day," they are forced to "fly the country as soon as possible" (Finati, *Narrative*, II, 294–99).

That his Albanian identity has been fully embraced is suggested by the final episode. Hajji Mahomet is called to England by Mr. Bankes to make a deposition in a legal case regarding a journey in 1816 the details of which are well-known to him. (We do not learn exactly what is at stake, but one suspects that the ownership of some of those antiquities he had sent back to England may have been contested.) There, in some principal cities, Hajji Mahomet meets with "rude behavior," where his "dress attracted not only attention, but so many insults from boys and idle people, that I found the necessity of taking refuge in a shop" (Finati, *Narrative*, II, 428). Giovanni Finati, Ferrarese, could well have taken off his identities, both sartorial and religious, once on British soil, but Hajji Mahomet, Muslim and Albanian, preferred to wear the skirt that Lord Byron modeled for his portrait in Albanian dress, painted by Thomas Philips in 1835. It is likely that, for those boys and idle people, Giovanni Finati's gender identity had drifted along with his religious and national belonging, and their rudeness had more than a little to do with their perception of that gendered identity. On that score, Finati-Mahomet himself has no comment. What is of interest to us here is the success of Finati-Mahomet's passing, especially as it might be juxtaposed to Burton's posing in relation both to class subordination and to racialization. As a *rinnegato*, Finati-Mahomet stood only to gain by passing as a soldier in Muhammad Ali's Albanian regiment in Egypt, and the dissimulation of his "Italian identity" was no doubt aided by the fact that, as we have noted, Italian was the lingua franca of the Mediterranean. It was therefore not necessary to entirely dissimulate his native linguistic

23 According to the *OED*, "Arnaout" refers to "an Albanian, *spec.* one serving in the Turkish army."

identity as, to judge from contemporary travel narratives, it was the norm to use Italian when first encountering a stranger. When he found himself among fellow Europeans, Finati-Mahomet's Albanian identity may well have shielded him from the disrespect he could reasonably expect, as both deserter and renegade, and the power he wielded as translator may have compensated for his class subordination in relation to his English employers. In any case, his behavior in England suggests that nothing was to be gained by revealing his Italian identity, whereas his Albanian identity was, in London, his ticket to a welcome by an English aristocracy given over to Egyptomania.

Finati-Mahomet subsequently returned to Egypt, where he took up a position as director of a hotel for European travelers. The last notice we have of him is from one Lord Prudhoe in 1829; no additional trace of the biography of Finati remains. It is certain, however, that he did not return to his native Italy. William Bankes, on the other hand, did end his life in Italy, where he fled after being prosecuted for "indulging in a homosexual act in a public place" in England.[24]

Before leaving Finati-Mahomet behind and moving on to his fellow-travelers, however, I would like to suggest that a trace of Finati's itinerary might be found through a contrapuntal reading of the sort Edward Said encouraged us to undertake in *Culture and Imperialism*. We return for a moment to the Italian peninsula, on the eve of the official completion of the Risorgimento (leaving aside the question of whether that move toward unification was in fact ever completed, and from whose point of view that might be said to have taken place or not), to Ippolito Nievo's 1859 historical novel *Confessioni di un italiano* [*Confessions of an Italian*], where Nievo revives the topos of "turning Turk" at the periphery of his diegetic world. My purpose in proposing such an impertinent philology is to underscore the persistence of an encounter with Islam as underwriting the imagining of Italian national identity.

Readers of the *Confessioni di un italiano* will remember the opening lines spoken by Nievo's protagonist, Carlino Altoviti, who begins the sprawling novel by announcing his desire for the consolidation of a national identity: "Io nacqui veneziano ai 18 ottobre 1775, giorno dell'Evangelista Luca; e morrò per la grazia di Dio italiano quando lo vorrà quella Provvidenza che governa misteriosamente il mondo"[25] [I was born a Venetian on 18 October,

24 Anthony Mitchell, ed., *Kingston Lacy, Dorset* (London: The National Trust, 1986) (rpt. 1991), 53.

25 Ippolito Nievo, *Confessioni di un italiano* (Milan: Garzanti, 1979), p. 1. Translated by Frederika Randall as *Confessions of an Italian* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

1775, the day of Saint Luke of the Gospel, and by God's grace I shall die an Italian, whenever that Providence that so mysteriously governs the world deems it right]. Parodying those lines, we might rewrite them for Giovanni Finati-Hajji Mahomet, who "nacque Ferrarese e morì, insciallah … Albanese" [was born Ferrarese and died, Inscha'Allah … Albanian]. Both Carlino's and Giovanni Finati's itineraries lead them from local, regional identities to larger, national ones. In his movement from the revolutionary yearnings sparked by the French Revolution to the disappointments and betrayals it occasioned, Carlino is the agent of a social mapping of Risorgimento Italy.[26] It is to Nievo's credit that the borders of the social map drawn by his novel already exceed those of the peninsula; its ideological project is to recount not only the "time of the nation" but also its space, and the family that is the figure of the nation takes us to emigrants in Latin America (the novel ends in 1855, with a letter from Carlino's son, in exile in Buenos Aires) as well as to travelers in the Mediterranean. In this respect, Finati's adventures provide a counterpoint to the teleological drive of Nievo's novel, amplifying our view of the emigrations that were equally a part of the molding as well as morphing of a malleable Italian national identity. Indeed, there is an uncanny resemblance between Finati and the apparently minor, eccentric figure of Carlino Altoviti's father: a father who, at the beginning of the narrative, was believed to have "turned Turk" ("si fosse fatto turco," 41), and who, hundreds of pages later, we hear about again through the letter of another, since he had "disimparato l'alfabeto italiano," [unlearned the Italian alphabet], and who dies wearing "larghe brache albanesi" [wide Albanian trousers] (570). As we have seen, Finati, too, "turns Turk" early on in his account, dictates his story because he has "unlearned" how to write, and hence we learn about him through the offices of another. And Finati-Mahomet, too, closes his narrative with a vignette in which we imagine him in those "brache albanesi." My point is obviously not to suggest that Nievo might have read Finati, but rather both to acknowledge the more capacious account Nievo offers of the move toward unification (compared, for example, with the more provincial version offered by Manzoni

26 I refer to "social mapping" as a nod to Lukács's theorization of the role of the "typical" character in the historical novel as that of providing a map of the social reality of his world. More recently, Franco Moretti has produced a literal map of the travels of Carlino and his family family in figure 32, "The international scenario of the European *Bildungsroman*" in *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900* (London: Verso, 1998), 67. Moretti notes that in German, Swiss, and Italian novels the lack of a national center produces an "irresolute wandering (which is however also a way of "unifying" a nation that does not yet exist" (66). Nievo's *Confessioni* is the only Italian example he offers.

in *The Betrothed*) and to place Finati's narrative in counterpoint to Nievo's, thereby moving the figure of the "Italian" *rinnegato* closer to the center rather than the periphery.

John Lewis Burckhardt, Sheikh Ibrahim ibn Abdullah

The second case is that of Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, known to his English readership as John Lewis Burckhardt, to his family as Jean Louis, and to those who met him in his travels to northern Africa and the Middle East, and during his residence in Cairo, as Sheikh Ibrahim ibn Abdullah. Whereas Giovanni Finati-Hajji Mahomet took on his new identity in almost picaresque fashion and recounts his travels with no knowledge of the Orientalist archive, Burckhardt not only studied for his role but quite consciously aimed to take up a position in that archive. With an eye to finding employment in some nation unallied with the French (whom he blamed for family misfortune), Burckardt left his native Switzerland for England in 1806. There, he offered his services to the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa and, while awaiting its decision, acquired a knowledge of Arabic, attended lectures on "chemistry, astronomy, mineralogy and surgery, and in the intervals of his studies he exercised himself by long journeys on foot, bareheaded, in heat of the sun, sleeping upon the ground, and living upon vegetables and water."[27] So wrote W. M. Leake, a member of the Association, in 1822, five years after Burckhardt's untimely death. His assignment was to obtain information about central Africa and, in particular, the source of the Niger river and its supposed confluence with the Nile. He did not live to accomplish this principal goal, but wrote extensively of his travels: *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land by the Late John Lewis Burckhardt* and *Travels in Nubia by the Late John Lewis Burckhardt* were both brought out by the publisher John Murray in 1822 (the same publisher who would bring out Finati's *Narrative* eight years later), and the two volumes of *Travels in Arabia, Comprehending an Account of those Territories in Hedjaz which the Mohammedans Regard as Sacred by the Late John Lewis Burckhardt* were published in 1829 by Henry Colburn. It is the latter, highly learned account of his pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina that will be of interest to us here, along with letters published

27 W. M. Leake, "Memoir of the Life and Travels of John Lewis Burckhardt," The Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, *Travels in Nubia by the Late John Lewis Burckhardt* (London: John Murray, 1822), v.

by the Association as a preface to his *Travels in Nubia*, for it is here that Burckhardt provides another example of passing as Muslim on the part of a European male in the early nineteenth century.

There is, predictably, some uncertainty as to whether or not Burckhardt actually converted to Islam. Katharine Sim, author of the popularizing biography *Desert Traveller: The Life of Jean Louis Burckhardt*, fudges the question, writing that, on the one hand, the family's descendants are certain that he remained a Christian and, on the other, that "Islam in its purest sense might well have suited him; possibly it, in fact, did."[28] In another popularizing account, *The Blue Nile*, Alan Moorehead similarly equivocates, suggesting that the fact that Burckhardt was buried as a Muslim "may not prove very much," and yet intimating that his sympathy for Islam and the desert was such that "his heart, his head, his whole generous nature" were involved in it.[29] John Rodenbeck, director of The American University in Cairo Press from 1974 to 1983, steers clear of the question by stating simply that Burckhardt lived and died as an Arab.[30] This uncertainty arises from the fact that Burckhardt himself does not state unequivocally that he had converted to Islam, but it may also be symptomatic of a reluctance on the part of Western observers to admit the "sincerity" of "turning Turk." Discursive rescue operations are frequently set in motion when conversion to Islam is at stake. An exemplary case might be the insistence with which the sincerity of the conversion to Islam of Burckhardt's servant and friend, Osman Effendi, is dismissed. A Scotsman by the original name of William Thomson (or Taylor: the question of surname is in dispute), he was taken prisoner by the Turks in 1807 and, the tale goes, forced to choose between death and conversion to Islam.[31]

28 Katharine Sim, *Desert Traveller: The Life of Jean Louis Burckhardt* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1969), 52.

29 Alan Moorehead, *The Blue Nile* (New York: Perennial, 1962) (rpt. 2000), 162.

30 John Rodenbeck, "Edward Said and Edward William Lane," in *Travellers in Egypt*, ed. Paul Starkey and Janet Starkey (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co., 1998), 233–43. Rodenbeck also somewhat uncharitably, although correctly, points out that Said confused John Lewis Burckhardt with Jacob Burckhardt, attributing to the latter authorship of the book *Arab Proverbs*, compiled by the former as he whiled away the time in Cairo, waiting in vain for a caravan to take him to Timbuktu. The two Burckhardts were related. See 234–36 in Rodenbeck, "Edward Said" and 159–60 in Said, *Orientalism*.

31 This is Osman's version of events as told to other Europeans; we have no corroborating accounts. Osman was a member of Burckhardt's household, accompanied him to Mecca, received a generous bequest upon his death (which included not only money but also his house, his slaves and his wife), and directed Burckhardt's Muslim funeral. Well known to European travelers to Egypt, he served as the secondary dragoman to the

Yet, despite living as a Muslim in all respects, at least some contemporary travelers insisted that he "preserved his veneration for his native country," and remarked upon his "inextinguishable nationality."[32] As we have already seen, anxieties about the extinguishability of nationality among Europeans were well-founded in early nineteenth-century Egypt, where identities of national belonging were routinely exchanged and rerouted. The question of the "sincerity" of conversion is thus often the tip-off to that anxiety, for it presupposes a gap between external practices and internal belief in the convert that facilitates exactly the "Jimmy Carter strategy" we have seen Finati invoke: a "sincere belief" in Christianity can be imagined to coexist with the "external" practices of an observant Muslim, and anxiety thereby assuaged. In our discussion of Leda Rafanelli in the next chapter we will have occasion to further explore this relation between interiority and exteriority in relation to the perception of Muslim belief and practices. For now, we can say that this same gap between interiority and external practice is at stake in the topos of "sincerity" and the insistence upon "disguise" where the possibility of actual conversion is held at bay by calling our attention to a reality beneath an appearance, the appearance therefore always designated as a "disguise." Another way to put this might be to say that the appearance/reality model is the narrative instantiation of the belief in a stable and coherent self that, in Parama Roy's words, "can resist the potential pollutions of this trafficking in native identity" (in which case identities are merely appearances).[33] By contrast, and as we have seen in the case of Finati-Mahomet, "passing" puts into question the stability of a self, and its openness to just such "pollutions." The sincerity or not of Burckhardt's conversion is not our focus here, but rather the persistence of "sincerity" as a topos in accounts of "disguised" Europeans. What is certain about Sheikh Ibrahim ibn Abdullah is that he devoted the years from 1809 until his death in 1817 to refining and perfecting his knowledge of Arabic, the Qur'an, Islamic doctrine, and the social and cultural practices of the Levant. If there was a gap between the appearance that he cultivated and an inner reality, he did not insist upon it, as would his

British Consul in Cairo. See Jason Thompson, "Osman Effendi: A Scottish Convert to Islam in Early Nineteenth-Century Egypt," *Journal of World History* 5:1 (1994): 99–123.

32 Recounted by Manley and Rée in *Henry Salt*, 83.

33 See the chapter "Oriental Exhibits: Englishmen and Natives in Burton's *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al'Madinah & Meccah*," in Parama Roy, *Indian Traffic: Identities in Question in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 28.

successor Richard Burton. If he was to obtain a "little fresh information," he must pass as Muslim, and pass he did. The modalities of that passing are what will interest us here, and are not without ironies and paradoxes.

We would be remiss if we did not refer again to the influential work of Homi Bhabha on mimicry and the constitution of the colonial subject as a necessary point of departure. Bhabha has compellingly theorized the ambivalence of colonial discourse as it produces excess in the figure of the mimic man, "almost the same but not quite," and who, through repetition and difference, ends up challenging the ontological stability of the identity of the colonizer he mimes. Building upon the foundation Bhabha has laid, Parama Roy has shifted her focus to mimicry on the part of the colonizer in her analysis of Richard Burton. For Roy, Burton provides a prime example of "the colonial observer who assumes the posture of authenticity and seeks to displace the native informant" (Roy, *Indian Traffic*, 18). Disguise is what allows this observer to be free from scrutiny (and therefore document all that he observes), and yet paradoxically that same disguise is also what forces upon him "an unrelenting vigilance in order to stave off" that very scrutiny (Roy, *Indian Traffic*, 24). In play are fantasies of seeing without being seen, of the transparency and legibility of "natives," and hence of the possibility of their perfect imitability on the part of the impersonating colonizer. In a departure from Bhabha's theorization, Roy, however, argues that the project of native impersonation points not to the ambivalence but to the single-mindedness of colonial discourse: "when figures such as Burton assume their disguises, they seem to do so with the fullest faith in their own unfragmented subjectivity and in their ability to 'disguise and conquer.'" (Roy, *Indian Traffic*, 27). In Burton's case, that "unfragmented subjectivity" is primarily, if not exclusively, his national belonging: his Englishness.

What is important to note at the outset are the ways in which these observations might be modified by our reading of Burckhardt. In Burton's case, Roy can speak confidently of a relation between Englishness and non-Englishness as these are articulated in the disguise of a British subject who was an officer of the British Empire in India. Burckhardt, instead, is a Swiss-German in service to an English "scientific" association in Egypt, and therefore can be said to occupy a subordinate position within a European apparatus of power that will only be "colonial" in a strict sense with the occupation of Egypt by Great Britain in 1882.[34] Indeed, C. A. Bayly has

34 I draw again upon Timothy Mitchell's helpful gloss of "colonial" in the context of nineteenth-century Egypt, as referring to the "colonizing nature of the power that the

suggested that Muhammad Ali's Egypt should be termed a "para-colonial" power. In the early nineteenth century Egypt was an expanding and modernizing state, one of several regional states that emerged from the dissolution of previous Asiatic empires, and which developed alongside the colonizing designs of European states.[35] Both historical context and national belonging are thus differently constituted in Burckhardt's case. For example, W. M. Leake, member of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, in justifying his own editorial interventions, takes care to note that Burckhardt should not be mistaken as English: although

> Mr. Burckhardt was gifted by nature with sagacity and memory for making accurate observations … it must not be forgotten that he wrote in a language that was not his native tongue, which he did not learn until he was twenty-five years of age, and in the writing of which he had little exercise, until he had arrived in those countries, where he very seldom heard it spoken, and where he had still more rarely any opportunities of referring to English models of composition.[36]

There is more than a little irony in this reminder that Burckhardt, who could pass undetected as a speaker of Arabic, a language he acquired at more or less the same age, should not be assumed to be an adequate speaker of English. The point, however, is that Burckhardt's national belonging is already riven; even before taking up the practices, habits, and comportment of a Muslim, his relation to Englishness is put into question rather than solidified. If Burton was undoubtedly an Englishman intent on passing as Muslim, Burckhardt was a Swiss whose passing as Muslim, I will argue, was facilitated by his posing as English.

To be sure, this complex juggling of identities is rarely on display. Unlike the theatrical, indeed histrionic, Burton, Burckhardt does not posture and preen, but rather remains mostly in the background. Like his successor Edward William Lane, Burckhardt would fall into Said's first category of Orientalists: those who sacrifice their egos to the task of writing, and consider

occupation [of Egypt by Great Britain in 1882] sought to consolidate, a power which began to develop around the beginning of the century if not earlier." Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 14.

35 See Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 228–29.

36 Leake, "Memoir," xcviii.

their residence a form of scientific observation.[37] He is on assignment, after all, and his mission is to provide the Association with all manner of information. Flora and fauna, substances both mineral and vegetable, customs and manners of human inhabitants, folklore and doctrine, architecture and topography, location of routes and wells, sources of food and water: no category of information is left out, and no detail is too minor to recount. The narrative moves from one domain to another as though there were no single perspective, neither "eye" nor "I," from which it proceeds. From a watermelon in the market to the Angel Gabriel appearing to Muhammad; from the rivulet that runs through the town to travelers staked and left to die by the road; from the ground covered with pebbles and petrosilex to marauding Bedouins: all are recounted on a single plane, as though equally and simply facts to be reported to his employers. Exceptions occur when questions about Burckhardt's identity arise and threaten to sidetrack him from his assignment, and for this he is apologetic. An early example is to be found a letter from October 2, 1809 to the Association. In it, he describes his journey from Malta to Aleppo, where he will spend two and a half years perfecting his Arabic. Prior to his arrival in Aleppo, he had planned to continue in his disguise as an "Indian Mohammedan merchant, the supposed bearer of dispatches from the East India Company to Mr. Barker British Consul," and whose dress was "somewhat Syrian, yet sufficiently differing from the real Syrian costume to show that I have no wish of passing for a native" (Leake, "Memoir," viii). Note that Burckhardt adopts an identity and mode of dress that does not claim to correspond in every detail to the actual "natives" among whom he finds himself; Burton will do the same, taking on what are often themselves already hybrid, fictionally constructed identities, such as the "half-Persian, half-Arab" merchant he impersonates in Sind, or the Pathan (Afghan from India) Muslim he impersonates in Hejaz. These identities are thus also "almost the same but not quite," but, rather than "not quite white," they are "somewhat Syrian," in Burckhardt's case and "half and half" in Burton's. If they are meant to diminish the chances of exposure, as

37 See Said, *Orientalism*, 157–58. Said's other two categories feature Burton as the prime example of the Orientalist who "is less willing to sacrifice the eccentricity and style of his individual consciousness," and Nerval as embodying the writer for whom a trip to the Orient is the "fulfillment of some deeply felt and urgent project." In *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770–1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), Nigel Leask devotes several pages to Burckhardt, and remarks that "his ascetic professionalism was pledged to the scientific institutions of the nation in whose service he was employed" (132).

surely they are, they also intimate more radical possibilities, as we shall have occasion to see in our discussion of Burton. New to the mode of dress, and not yet fluent in Arabic, Burckhardt is several times put to the test along the way. In Antakya his fellow travelers as well as the townspeople suspect he is a Frank, and the local Ağa sends his dragoman to investigate:

> This was a wretched Frank, who pretended to be a Frenchman but whom I should rather suppose to be a Piemontese. I pretended complete ignorance of the French language; he therefore asked me in Italian minutely about my affairs, and how I could attempt to travel home without any money or goods, to defray the expense of the journey. I answered that I hoped the Consul, in remuneration of my having carefully watched his effects, would pay the expense of a camel from Aleppo to Bagdad, and at the latter place I was sure of finding friends to facilitate my farther journey. When the man saw nothing in my manners that betrayed my Frank origin, he made a last trial, and pulling my beard a little with his hand, asked me familiarly "Why I had let such a thing grow?" I answered him with a blow upon his face, to convince the by-standing Turks, how deeply I resented the received insult; and the laugh now turned against the poor Dragoman, who did not trouble me any farther. I am at a loss to state how far I succeeded in sustaining my assumed character; I thought that the major part of the caravan people were gained over to my side, but the town's people were constant in their imprecations against me. (Leake, "Memoir," xxii–xxiii)

An Italian pretending to be French (and who, as Piedmontese in 1809, would have, in fact, been a French subject, insofar as Piedmont was under French control) tests a Swiss pretending to be an Indian in the employ of the British, in Italian (lingua franca of the Levant), before an audience of Turks in Syria: the scenario itself already complicates any notion one might have of unfragmented national belongings. The only position that might conceivably be unriven could be that of the bystanding Turk: the sole representative of an Empire in this case. This is the first of several scenes that suggest that disguise and pretense form the horizon of expectations for the European participants. Simulation (the Piedmontese pretending to be French) and dissimulation (Burckhardt pretending not to understand the French language) are the rules of the game, and Burckhardt plays it well when he feigns insult at the insinuation that his beard might be false, or in any case a false indicator of his identity. That Burckhardt does not offer many more examples of such

encounters has to do with the nature of his assignment, as we have suggested above. Indeed, it is on this occasion, early in his travels, that he apologizes to his employers and promises that such personal accounts will not recur:

> You need not be afraid that the history of my own person, which has taken up so considerable a portion of the preceding pages, will any more be exhibited before you at such length. I thought it might be of some interest to the Association, to see how far I was able to succeed in making good my way to Aleppo in the disguise in which I left London; unaided as I was by a knowledge of Eastern languages, or a familiarity with Eastern manners. (Leake, "Memoir," xxvii)

Five years later Burckhardt is considerably more familiar with both languages and manners, having spent two and half years in Aleppo before transferring to Cairo in 1812, whence he traveled to Upper Egypt and Sudan in 1813–1814. During this time his itinerary intersects with that of Belzoni, and there would be much to say about his *Travels in Nubia* in the context of early nineteenth-century explorations of Africa. Since our focus in this chapter is primarily on the pilgrimage to Mecca, however, we will limit ourselves to a single episode drawn from this period, for it casts yet another light on passing and posing. It is February 1813, and Burckhardt has traveled to Derr from Aswan, "dressed in the Thabaut, or blue gown, of the merchants of Upper Egypt, having quitted my common Turkish travelling dress at Esne" (The Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, *Travels in Nubia*, 3). He has nothing with him but his "gun, sabre, and pistol, a provision bag and a woolen mantle," as well as several letters of recommendation, including one from Muhammad Ali and another from Hassan Bey, the Turkish governor of Esne. Along the way he encounters both the British travelers Messrs. Legh and Smelt and a group of Turkish soldiers who warn him that the Mamluks would strike off his head should they learn that he was the bearers of letters from the Turks. Upon arrival at his destination he alights at the house of Hassan Kachif, "as do all travelers of respectability" (18). Here he discovers that two Mamluks are also lodged with the *Kashif* (head of district and tax collector) and, fearing what might happen should they discover Turkish connections, he changes his plan of action and steps out of his disguise:

> It had been my intention, before I knew of the arrival of the Mamelouks, to pass for a person sent by the Pasha upon a secret mission into Nubia, having learnt from the people of upper Egypt, that the governors of that

> country dread the power of Mohammed Aly, and would not dare to molest me: but when I was apprised of the arrival of the two Begs … . I thought it would be dangerous to disguise my real intentions; and, encouraged by the success of the Messrs. Legh and Smelt, I candidly told Hassan Kashef, that I had come to make a tour of pleasure through Nubia, like the two gentlemen who had been at Derr before me. (The Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, *Travels in Nubia*, 18)

Burckhardt comes clean as the Frank that he is, but his candor backfires:

> The frank avowal of my intentions was interpreted as a mere scheme of deception; no one would believe that I was only a curious traveler; the Arabic I spoke, and my acquaintance with Turkish manners, led the Kashef to believe that I was a Turk, and sent by Hassan Beg of Esne to watch his motions. (The Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, *Travels in Nubia*, 18–19)

Burckhardt has become so adept at passing as a native that he can no longer pass as himself! No stepping out of the disguise is possible.

It is at the outset of Burckhardt's pilgrimage to Mecca that the most interesting episode for our purposes takes place. Allow me to set the stage, with the assumption that my readers are likely not to be familiar with the two volumes of *Travels in Arabia*. In August 1814 Burckhardt announced to his employers his intention to perform the hajj, since no opportunity of joining a caravan to the African interior had presented itself. The anonymous editor of the Association opines that "it was his firm conviction, that the title of Hadj, which his pilgrimage gave him the right to assume, would be of the greatest use to him in his future travels to the interior of Africa" (Leake, "Memoir," lxiii), although Burckhardt himself does not frame the pilgrimage in this way. With "two dollars and a few sequins sewed up in an amulet" to his name, plus a letter of credit which no one will honor, Burckhardt appeals to Muhammad Ali himself for temporary funds. Now "in the dress of a reduced Egyptian gentleman" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 5), Burckhardt awaits a reply in Jeddah (in present-day Saudi Arabia; it is the main gateway to Mecca and Media). The reply sets into motion a test of the veracity of Burckhardt's conversion to Islam, and reveals yet further complications in his passing and posing. Muhammad Ali invites Burckhardt to join him at Ta'if, instructing his guide, however, to take a route to the north of Mecca; Burckhardt understands the

slight as casting doubt upon his faith, and is not surprised when he finds himself scrutinized not only by the Pasha but by the *qadi* (or Islamic judge) from Mecca. Muhammad Ali already knows him to be a European (though not, as we learn later, a Swiss); it is reported to Burckhardt that, upon hearing of his desire to perform the Hajj, the Pasha "observed jocosely: 'it is not the beard alone which proves a man to be a true Muslim,' and turning to the *qadi*, remarks 'you are a better judge in such matters than I am'" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 130).[38] Insulted anew, the cheeky Burckhardt sends a message to the Pasha that he "certainly should not go to the Pasha's public audience, if he would not receive [him] as a Turk" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 131). A savvy Muhammad Ali replies that he will receive him "Turk or not," and several audiences subsequently take place with the *qadi* present, and with Burckhardt speaking to the Pasha either in Arabic or in Italian, depending upon who was present and available as translator, through translation into Turkish (for Muhammad Ali was notorious for not speaking Arabic to his subjects). The episode finds Sheikh Ibrahim Ibn Abdullah both posing as English and passing as "Turk," where "Turk," again, is synonymous with Muslim. It is worth remembering that Michael Rogin had theorized a combination of passing and posing in his discussion of blackface, when he argued that blackface "became a means of white-washing the assimilating Jew," and that, therefore, "posing as black is ultimately a way to pass as white." (Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 141). In Burckhardt's case, we might say that he adopts both identities strategically in order to attain the privileges that they confer the better to position himself in relation to two very different sets of observers: his hosts and his employers. The Pasha, we learn, knew Burckhardt "as an Englishman, a name which I assumed during my travels (I hope without any discredit to that country), whenever it seemed necessary to appear as an European because at that time none but the subjects of England and France enjoyed in the East any real security" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 136). His assumption of an English identity comes about, it would seem, as a result of assumptions made by the Pasha:

> the Pasha, moreover, supposed me to be a man of some rank, for every Englishman traveling in the East is styled 'My Lord'; and he was the more convinced of this by a certain air of dignity which it was necessary for me

38 Lionel Gossman takes the remark that "it is not the beard alone" to refer not to knowledge of the Qur'an but to circumcision. See his unpublished essay "La Suisse nomade: Trois voyageurs Bâlois," http://www.princeton.edu/~lgossman/gossman-nomade.pdf, 85, fn 151.

> to assume in a Turkish court, where modesty of behavior and affability are quite out of place. (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 136)

Here the Ottoman expectations concerning dignity at court intersect with assumptions about the rank of travelers and their nationality to encourage the adoption of a pose on Burckhardt's part. The merely modest Swiss (or "Alpine mountaineer," as he elsewhere refers to his countrymen) would apparently not stand a chance of survival, a suggestion which is confirmed in one of their conversations.[39] Anxious to understand the terms of a treaty recently concluded in Paris, which has been translated into Turkish for him, Muhammad Ali has the terms explained in turn to Burckhardt in Arabic; the Pasha is particularly concerned that Genoa has apparently been ceded to the Swedes! It turns out that, through a phonetic resemblance of "Genoa" to "Geneva" in Turkish, the terms in question are not Genoa and Sweden, but rather Geneva and Switzerland, " a town and country which, I am sorry to say, were not comprised in the geographical knowledge of a Turkish Viceroy" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 148).

This is the one episode in which Burckhardt-the-observer is himself mostly closely observed, and both his English and Muslim identities are scrutinized. Anxious to prove his Muslim credentials, Burckhardt takes care to cite long passages from the Qur'an in the presence of the *qadi*, who in any event did not believe that he would "declare [himself] to be one, unless [he] really was," given that "none but a Muslim could be permitted to see the holy cities" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 130). While we would have expected exposure as an infidel to be the most urgent threat, it turns out that Burckhardt's English persona is a source of greater concern: he learns that he is considered "in no other light than as a spy sent to this country by the English government, to ascertain its present state, and report upon it in the East Indies" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 136). Now, Burckhardt has at this point in his travels adopted several different identities, most recently that of an Egyptian of reduced circumstances; here his original persona as an Indian merchant in the service

39 Burckhardt mentions adopting his native tongue strategically on one occasion in an 1809 letter to the Association when he recounts how, in posing as an "Indian Mohammedan merchant," he is sometimes called upon to produce a "specimen of the Hindu language," and "answered in the worst dialect of the Swiss German, almost unintelligible even to a German, and which, in its guttural sounds, may fairly rival the harshest utterance of Arabic." The Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, ed., *Travels In Nubia by the Late John Lewis Burckhardt* (London: John Murray, 1822), xii.

of the East India Company seems to return to haunt him, and he is suspected of being in the employ of the British government. Posing as English has exacted a political price. Finding that he is "closely watched" and "never allowed to be alone" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 135), Sheikh Ibrahim ibn Abdullah counters by exaggerating his performance as a Turk. Lodged with the Pasha's physician, an Armenian by the name of Bosari, Burckhardt craftily exploits Eastern hospitality, playing his part to the hilt as an "Osmanly," or Ottoman subject:

> I therefore began to act at his house with all the petulance of an Osmanly. It being the Ramadhan, I fasted during the day, and at night demanded a supper apart; early on the following morning, I called for an abundant breakfast, before the fast re-commenced. I appropriated to myself the best room which his small house afforded; and his servants were kept in constant attendance upon me. Eastern hospitality forbids all resentment of such behavior; I was, besides, a great man, and on a visit to the Pasha … . To maintain a person in my character for any length of time at Tayf, where provisions of all kinds were much dearer than in London, was a matter of no small moment; and a petulant guest is everywhere disagreeable. The design, I believe, succeeded perfectly; and Bosari endeavoured to persuade the Pasha that I was a harmless being, in order that I might be the sooner dismissed. (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 137–38)

Burckhardt is so successful that Bosari suggests that he depart with the party of the *qadi* himself, bound for Mecca, and the Pasha approves his plan by issuing the equivalent of a *nihil obstat*. After a ten-day stay in Ta'if Burckhardt is thus on his way, freed from his "polite imprisonment" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 137). As to whether or not Muhammad Ali himself believed that Burckhardt professed Islam, Burckhardt remains uncertain, noting, on the one hand, that he "certainly treated me as a Muselman, and I flattered myself that the boldness of my conduct at Tayf had convinced him that I was a true proselyte" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 150), and that he was permitted to live, after his return to Cairo, "without molestation, as a Moslem, in the Turkish quarter" (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 152). We know as well that his dying words, as reported to the Association by Henry Salt, were "the Turks will take my body, I know it, perhaps you had better let them," and that he requested and received a Muslim funeral (Leake, "Memoir," xvc). On the other hand, however, Burckhardt notes that the Pasha was later:

> anxious to convince Mr. Salt … that he knew perfectly well, in the Hedjaz, that I was no Moslem, but that his friendship for the English nation made him overlook the circumstance, and permit me to impose on the Kadhy. He entertained a notion, suggested to him by some of his Frank counsellors at Cairo, that, in some future account of my travels, I might perhaps boast of having imposed upon him, like Aly Bey Abassi, whose work had just been received at Cairo, and who declares that he deceived not only the Pasha, but all the olemas, or learned men, of Cairo. To Mohammed Aly it was of more consequence not to be thought a fool than a bad muselman. (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 151)

The expression "to impose upon" is here used with the meaning "to practice imposture," and the passage suggests that Muhammad Ali was a shrewd manipulator of Europeans' shifting identities, allowing Burckhardt to "impose upon" the *qadi* all the better to curry favor with his other, English, identity. It also suggests that the Pasha was well aware of the role travel accounts might be playing in relations between England and Egypt, and that careful husbanding of his own image ("not to be thought a fool") was crucial in the still volatile political landscape of 1814.

Burckhardt subsequently provides an abundantly detailed description of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina (although he was largely confined owing to illness in the latter); floor plans are more significantly featured than imposture, however, since Burckhardt tells us that this is the one place where *everyone* assumes a "false character":

> I frequented only such society as pleased me and, mixing with a crowd of foreign pilgrims from all parts of the world, I was not liable to impertinent remarks or disagreeable inquiries. If any question arose about my origins (a circumstance that rarely happened in a place which always abounds with strangers), I stated myself to be a reduced member of the Mameluck corps of Egypt, and found it easy to avoid those persons whose intimate knowledge of that country might perhaps have enabled them to detect the falsehood. But there was little to be apprehended even from the consequences of such detection; for the assumption of false character is frequent among all eastern travelers, and especially at Mekka, where every one affects poverty in order to escape imposition, or being led into great expenses. During all my journies in the East, I never enjoyed such perfect ease as at Mekka. (*Travels in Arabia*, I, 184)

Note that Burckhardt anticipates detection of feigned poverty, not of feigned religious affiliation. Were we looking for evidence of the "sincerity" of his conversion, this could be one place that suggests he did not feel he was under threat of death precisely because he felt himself to be authentically Muslim. At the same time, this is a demystification of the masquerade at Mecca that deprives it of the conditions of possibility of the masquerade itself, insofar as the masquerader, if he is to imagine himself truly in masquerade, must suppose himself to be alone among a sea of authentic, and simply transparent, "natives": he, the charlatan, and they, the dupes. In either case, however, it would seem that Mecca hardly provides the backdrop for the sort of *frisson* of possible exposure fantasized by other masqueraders, and by readers in their turn, there being "little to be apprehended by such detection." Nothing could be further from the Mecca conjured up by Richard Francis Burton some 39 years later.

Giovanni Belzoni, Accidental Antiquarian

In 1822 Giambattista Brocchi, "fu ispettore generale delle miniere del cessato governo italico" [ex-Inspector General of Mines of the Ceased Italic Government], set sail for Cairo from Trieste.[40] Deprived of employment by the abolition of the "Consiglio delle miniere," Brocchi had learned that the Vice-Roy of Egypt, as Muhammad Ali was often referred to by Europeans, was in need of a naturalist who might discover "miniere utili allo Stato" [mines useful to the State] in Egypt, and offered his services. This is how he described the current state of Egypt upon arrival in Alexandria:

> Amplissima poi è la libertà di cui godono i Franchi in Alessandria, e generalmente in tutto l'Egitto, di maniera che sembra cosa assai strana a chi parte dai paesi dell'Europa, ove tanto infierisce la inquisizione politica, di sentire come in pubblico, e senza verun riguardo, si detronizzino a piacimento i sovrani, si divida il mondo a proprio beneplacito, e si sfoggino sistemi e presagi sul futuro destino delle nazioni. Il Bascià

40 Brocchi's account was published posthumously as *Giornale delle osservazioni fatte ne' viaggi in Egitto, nella Siria e nella Nubia, da G. B. Brocchi, Fu ispettore generale delle miniere nel cessato governo italico, membro pensionato dell'istituto di scienze lettere ed arti in Milano, socio delle più insigni accademie d'Italia ed oltremontane, ec. cc.* On Brocchi, see Attilio Brilli's brief remarks in *Il viaggio in Oriente*, 106–07.

> medesimo non è risparmiato, e le sue operazioni vengono pubblicamente sindacate, quando ciò si creda a proposito, senza ch'egli ne abbia a male. Qui ciascheduno esercita quella professione che più gli aggrada. Viene uno e si spaccia medico senza avere i più piccoli principii di questa scienza; viene un altro, e si erge in farmacista, dispensando droghe e rimedi; un giocoliere diventa idraulico, poi antiquario.[41]
>
> [The freedom enjoyed by Franks in Alexandria, and in all of Egypt more generally, is so great that it seems very strange to those who come from European countries (where political inquisition rages) to hear how sovereigns are dethroned at pleasure, in public and openly. One can divide up the world as one likes, systems are concocted and predictions of the future destiny of nations are made.
>
> The Pasha himself is not spared, and his operations are criticized publicly, when it is deemed appropriate, and he takes no umbrage. Here everyone practices the profession that pleases him most. One plays doctor without knowing even the tiniest fundamentals of that science; another sets himself up as a pharmacist, dispensing drugs as remedies; a jester becomes a plumber, and then an antiquarian.]

The jester turned plumber turned antiquarian is none other than Giovanni Belzoni himself, the circus strongman known in Britain as the "Patagonian Sampson," famed for the "human pyramid" and, as we have already seen in Chapter 1, the object of ridicule on the part of other travelers. For his contemporary Giambattista Brocchi he is a prime example of the malleability of identities and professions available to Europeans in Muhammad Ali's Egypt. More recently, literary scholar Nigel Leask has attributed to Belzoni "an anxiety about his own unstable social and cultural identity" that, for Leask, would be rooted in his inability entirely to shake his former career as circus strongman, going so far as to suggest that Belzoni's *Narrative* is the "pantomimic double" of Burckhardt's *Travels*.[42] That Leask finds in Belzoni a "ruling passion for mimicry" makes it all the more striking that, unlike the other three figures examined in this chapter, Belzoni neither passed nor posed as Muslim. Our interest here thus veers away slightly from the masquerade at Mecca in order to return to the intra-European rivalry we have already seen in Chapter 1, and the place of Italians in it, as well as to examine

41 Brocchi, *Giornale delle osservazioni fatte ne' viaggi in Egitto*, 92.

42 Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, 131.

a "counter-discourse" produced in this context, in several examples of Turks masquerading as Franks. Leask is certainly right to point to an anxiety about social and cultural identity in Belzoni's case, but I hope to show that it is an anxiety overdetermined by an instability of national belonging, in addition to that of professional affiliation.

In the "Preface" to his *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia; and of a Journey to the Coasts of the Red Sea, in Search of the Ancient Berenice; and Another in the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon*, Belzoni recounts the origin of his travels:

> The state and troubles of Italy in 1800, which are too well known to require any comment from me, compelled me to leave it, and from that time I have visited different parts of Europe, and suffered many vicissitudes. The greater part of my younger days I passed in Rome, the former abode of my ancestors where I was preparing myself to become a monk; but the sudden entry of the French army in that city altered the course of my education, and being destined to travel, I have been a wanderer ever since.[43]

As with Nizzoli and Finati, it was the Napoleonic invasion of Italy that set into motion the migration that eventually brought Belzoni to Egypt. A Romantic "wanderer," however, he is not; it would be more precise to term him an "operator," in keeping with his own title, *Narrative of the Operations*. Drawn to Egypt to propose a new hydraulic method of irrigation to the modernizing Pasha, Belzoni's demonstration of his water machine to Muhammad Ali famously fails; out of work, he hears from Burckhardt of opportunities that might similarly make use of his engineering talents, and the career of "The Great Belzoni," accidental antiquarian, is born.[44] In undertaking to excavate and transport the bust of "Memnon," Belzoni soon finds himself treacherously wedged between competing national interests: those of the "para-colonial" state of Egypt, Great Britain, and France, each embodied in a main player: the Pasha Muhammad Ali, the English Consul Henry Salt, and the French (ex)

43 Belzoni, *Narrative*, 85.

44 For highly readable biographies, see Stanley Mayes, *The Great Belzoni: The Circus Strongman Who Discovered Egypt's Ancient Treasures* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2003) and Ivor Noël Hume, *Belzoni: The Giant Archaeologists Love to Hate* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

Consul Bernardino Drovetti, respectively. Leask tellingly refers to Drovetti as "French/Italian" (Leask, *Curiosity*, 138) and "French (although really fellow Italian) rival Drovetti" (Leask, *Curiosity*, 138), thereby putting his finger on the problem we mean to untangle. There was certainly no mutual recognition among "fellow Italians" when Bernardino Drovetti, Giovanni Belzoni, and Giovanni Finati met in the desert; if the French-dominated Piedmontese Drovetti was perhaps predictably not felt to be a "fellow Italian," it is somewhat odder that Belzoni, who grew up in Padua, a mere 40 miles from Ferrara, never acknowledges Finati as anything other than "the Albanian." What kinds of shape-shifting strategies did refugees from the Italian peninsula adopt in their encounters with the social mobility suddenly made possible for them in early nineteenth-century Egypt? Was it a sense of regional belonging that prevented any proto-national affect from manifesting itself in the various meetings of "Italians" in the desert? Or did the state-less Italians possess so little social capital that nothing was to be gained by fellow recognition? The questions pose themselves both because of Belzoni's role in capitalist expansionism in the region and because of the facility with which so-called "Italians" slipped through what national grids were in place.

Belzoni was not only wedged between competing national interests but, in attempting to transform the Egyptian and Nubian peasantry into the wage laborers necessary for his "operations," he also found himself at, and as, a switching point between a gift economy of reciprocal exchange, in which money was unknown and no pool of alienable labor existed (especially in Upper Egypt, untouched as yet by Muhammad Ali's modernizing methods), and a primitive capitalist economy in which he played the roles of pedagogue and foreman. As Leask has shown, the narrative becomes the site of a struggle over value, as Belzoni both exploits and excoriates the native Egyptians for their ignorance of the exchange value of the "stones" that the Europeans are so eager to take away, and the Egyptians in turn hinder the commodity exchange and labor required by involving the Europeans in the giving of gifts and demanding of *bakshis*, and by refusing to "sell" their labor power. The dynamic is not a new one, of course; it is familiar to us in the colonial discourse of trinkets and baubles, which will forever be encapsulated for me in the "fact" taught to generations of schoolchildren that "Manhattan was purchased from the Indians for $24 of trinkets," and which William Pietz has compellingly linked to the "problem of the fetish."[45] In a nutshell, that

45 See William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish," Part I, *Res* 9 (1985): 5–17; Part II, *Res* 13 (1987): 23–45; Part III, *Res* 16 (1988): 105–23.

"problem" arose in the cross-cultural spaces of western Africa in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when relations between European traders and Africans caused differing systems of values to collide. The so-called Guinea Coast was the principal site of this collision, since it was, for the Portuguese and Dutch traders, the source of the world's gold, and they were there quite simply to take it and run. To their irritation, the Africans involved them in all kinds of social relations that sidetracked their central purpose; the "fetish," a material object infused with value, became the roadblock in their commercial relations. The problem of the fetish thus articulates itself as a discourse about the falsity of another culture's values, as viewed from a mercantilist ideology for which objects carry only commodifiable use and exchange value. "Baubles and trinkets" play a prominent role in this discourse, and are adopted to exploit pre-capitalist "ignorance" of exchange value of European capitalism. Indeed, "trinkets" already played a part in the voyages of discovery, and even constituted a portion of the cargo of the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. Peter Hulme has brilliantly argued that the presence of such trinkets in the holds of Columbus's ships suggests that Columbus may have anticipated encountering peoples other than those of the Great Khan in China, his ostensible destination and, after all, home to a highly civilized merchant class: namely, "savage" peoples who might treasure such trinkets.[46] Belzoni continues in this tradition, having stocked up on such "trifles" before his departure:

> Previous to our departure from Cairo, I took occasion to obtain all the information possible concerning the country of Nubia from the natives who came to that city with dates and charcoal; and from them I learned that a looking glass and a few Venetian beads would be equal there to silver plate and pearls. (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 129)

The Nubians in particular – "wild people" who were "ignorant of money altogether" – could thus be contented with glass beads that resembled pearls (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 131). Not perceiving the "stones" – the statues and temples

46 In his masterful reading of "Columbus and the Cannibals," Peter Hulme has proposed that the baubles are the sign that Columbus knew that the dream of a short route to China was a fantasy: "The baubles offer themselves for interpretation. As an embodiment of the new economic order of colonialism growing within the husk of medieval commerce. As a sign that Columbus 'knew' that the Genoese dream was a fantasy." See Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, 39.

of such interest to the European – to be of any value in and of themselves, they not illogically suppose that the stones must contain hidden treasure – gold, rubies, pearls, and diamonds – that is, in Marx's formulation, "riches" that are imagined to exist apart from their circulation in exchange.[47]

The logic that produces the topos of hidden treasure is one that can be drawn from the very first chapters of *Capital*, where Marx traces the development of the "mystery of money" from use value to the universal equivalent. That logic would go like this: for the Egyptian peasants, the stones have no use value; having no use value, the stones are not imagined as having any exchange value; hence, if there *is value*, as the behavior of the Franks suggests, they must have it secretly. There is more than a little irony in the fact that Belzoni, whom one might have supposed would be intensely interested in the value of hieroglyphs (which had not yet been deciphered by Champollion when Belzoni was in Egypt), turns out instead to be deeply invested in what Marx called the "social hieroglyph" of value in a famous section of the first chapter of *Capital*:

> whenever, by an exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labour, the different kinds of labour expended upon them. We are not aware of this, nevertheless we do it. Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyph.[48]

Through his fostering of wage labor, Belzoni, we might say, is on a mission to introduce the social hieroglyph into modern Egypt, as a necessary prelude to extracting the "stones" bearing the literal hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt. The most telling episode in this regard takes place not by chance in Upper Egypt in Nubia, where the conflict between gift and barter economies and the money economy Belzoni is bent on introducing is most explicitly addressed. In what might be called a fantasy of the origins of capital itself, Belzoni undertakes to solve the problem of the commensurability that makes exchange possible. It is August 20, 1816:

47 "When the Arabs found that they received money for the removal of a stone, they entertained the opinion, that it was filled with gold in the inside, and that a thing of such value should not be permitted to be taken away." Belzoni, *Narrative*, 112.

48 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967) (rpt. 1984), I, 79.

> Next day in the morning the people came slowly to work, but upon the whole we went on very well, though I had much ado to make them proceed in the right way. The Cacheff, with his attendants, come to see how we were proceeding, and gave me to understand, that he intended dining with me. I told him I was very glad of his company, but had nothing except boiled rice, unless he would order his people to kill a sheep for us, which I would gladly pay for. They consulted about who could afford to part with a sheep, and receive piastres in payment, and at last the order was given to an old man, who had five, which was a greater number than anyone else. Being the first ever sold for money in that place, to put a high price on it would have increased the value of sheep in general, and consequently would have been against the interests of the Cacheff; for when he receives his revenue in these animals, he sets them at a very low price, that he may have the more given him. To estimate it at a low price would be worse, for it would be against them all in the exchange of sheep for dhourra with other villages. Finding it a dangerous point to decide, it was at length resolved, that no price at all should be put upon the sheep, but that the man should make me a present of it, and I should give him any thing I pleased in return. To prevent any standard being established from what I gave the man, I paid him in soap, tobacco, and salt. (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 139)

To readers of Marx the episode may bring to mind the passage in the first chapter of *Capital* in which Marx explains why Aristotle, so smart in everything else, was unable to solve the problem of value. Observing that "exchange cannot place without equality, and equality not without commensurability," Aristotle is stumped when it comes to figuring out how five beds = one house, or five beds = "so much money": in our example, how the first sheep "ever sold for money" can equal so many piastres.[49] The "equal something" that makes exchange something other than a "makeshift for practical purposes," Marx is the first to tell us, is human labor, a concept unavailable to Aristotle because the material conditions of the society in which he lived, based on slave labor, prevented him solving the problem. Belzoni produces just such a makeshift; unable to decipher the social hieroglyph of value, he reverts to a gift economy that would "prevent any standard being established."

49 Marx, *Capital*, 65.

Caught between two economies, Belzoni is also caught between two fetishisms: that of the commodity fetishism Marx names with his metaphor of the social hieroglyph, in which the social relations among producers are disguised in the products of their labor, and the fetishism of relations among people that is characteristic of pre-capitalist societies, in which social status appears to be a natural property.[50] As Žižek has noted, these two fetishisms are incompatible, and their dissonance dogs Belzoni, both acting as obstacle to his "operations" and producing their own symptom in the form of contradictory ethnographic observations. It is in Nubia that the conflict is at its greatest; Belzoni must "persuade" the local populace into working for him for "a small piece of metal," on the one hand, and reciprocate the gifts of the local sovereigns, on the other. On one occasion, he miscalculates badly, unaware that, between his First Journey and his Second, one of the local *Kashifs* has risen in status following the death of his father. Operations are stalled, as Calil, the slighted *Kashif*, prohibits his men from working for Belzoni until an appropriate gift of a gun evens the relations between the two brother *Kashifs* in question (Daud and Calil). Europeans and Nubians reciprocally misunderstand the values of exchange: for Belzoni, gifts of sheep come at inconvenient moments and cause him to lose valuable time: Calil Kachif "sent us some aqua vitae and a lamb. We were sorry for this, as it retarded us," writes Belzoni, characterizing such "civility" as "forced politeness" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 195). As for the Nubians, Leask has astutely analyzed the topos of the "worthless stones," in which both Nubians and Egyptians represented "the surplus value of European aesthetics in terms of 'treasure' concealed inside antiquities" (Leask, *Curiosity*, 145).[51]

From this clash emerges the contradictory characterization of the indigenous peoples as at once ignorant of the value of money and yet avaricious;

50 I am thinking here about both Marx's footnote regarding the quality of being a king in the first volume of *Capital* and Slavoj Žižek's analysis of it in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1989), 24–26. Marx writes (*Capital*, 63): "One man is king only because other men stand in the relation of subjects to him. They, on the contrary, imagine that they are subjects because he is king."

51 Leask compellingly argues that the Nubians have a "magical" reaction (where there is fetishism, magic is never far away) to the alienation of their own labor in the removal of the "stones," finding it to be the work of the devil: "Belzoni brutalizes his workers, who in turn find a magical description for their alienated labor … . As yet unversed in ideologies of proletarian solidarity or national heritage, the labourers 'anthropomorphise their subjugation in the figure of the devil'." (*Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, 149). Leask is here citing from Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 10.

"lazy" with respect to capitalist economy insofar as being unwilling to sell their labor power, but perceived to be "greedy" on the other, insofar as they demand gift exchanges to establish and sustain social relations.[52] A healthy dosage of what, in another context, Stephen Greenblatt has called "ideological forgetting" – a kind of amnesia on Belzoni's part about the nature of his own actions as exploitative and appropriative – is also thrown into the mix.[53] Belzoni is ruthless in exploiting the Nubians' belief that the stones themselves are worthless and that the temples must therefore contain gold when it serves his purposes. On one occasion, a local notable whom we have encountered already in Burckhardt's narrative (Hassan Kachif) makes Belzoni "promise, that, if I found the temple full of gold, I should give him half. To this I agreed, on condition that if I found only stones, they should all be my own property; and he immediately assented, for he said he wanted no stones" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 136). On another occasion, he tricks a *Kashif* in an elementary lesson about exchange value, having plotted in advance to "sell" him more grain than the money was worth, and throughout his operations he extracts as much surplus value as he possibly can from his native labor force.[54] And yet, though his own tricks are openly acknowledged, Belzoni also "forgets" the nature of his own actions when he complains that the Nubians "think only of contriving new tricks to extort more" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 138) and "are the most cheating people on earth" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 144). Framed as ethnographic observation, such descriptions fail to factor into the picture the context of cross-cultural exchange in which the Nubians are both

52 For a lucid account of a later explorer's negotiations with a gift economy, see Cristina Lombardi-Diop, "Gifts, Sex, and Guns: Nineteenth-Century Italian Explorers in Africa," in Patrizia Palumbo, ed., *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 119–37.

53 I refer to Greenblatt's wonderful analysis of the discourse of the marvelous in Columbus's first letter, in *Marvelous Possessions*, 173.

54 In the episode with Daud Kachif, Belzoni arranges in advance to have any native who should come to his ship with money to give him the dhourra flour he requests. His first buyer is the *Kashif* himself, who, having declared that he is "sure no one will give six grains of dhourra for so small a bit of iron," is immediately sent to the ship and his request granted. "This experiment," writes Belzoni, "had a good effect, not only on the minds of the people, but also on that of the Cacheef; though, barbarian-like, he was not yet thoroughly satisfied. He observed, that a man who labored a whole day ought to have four times that measure for his; therefore, if I would give them four piastres a day each, he would persuade the people to work." The not so "barbarian-like" *Kashif* is a quick study in the ways of capitalist entrepreneurs (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 132)!

responding in kind to the lessons in capitalism taught them by the Europeans and teaching the Europeans in turn the complications of their own relations of reciprocal dependence.[55]

A second consequence of the co-existence of competing economies concerns Belzoni's own status as employee of Henry Salt, a status his narrative sets out vehemently to deny; indeed, it is one of the principal purposes of his account to "positively deny" that he was "regularly employed by Mr. Salt" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 102). This denial does not aim to dissociate Belzoni from the British "cause"; quite the contrary: Belzoni holds steadfast to his goal of his "researches for antiquities, which were to be placed in the British Museum" (102), and he protests loudly that he "had no other view, than to serve the nation at large" (156). Leask has suggested that Belzoni's vehement denial is an indicator of his "status sensitivity" and anxiety about his "unstable social and cultural identity," which he attributes to Belzoni's unshakeable past as circus strongman and pantomime actor. To this we would add that a national belonging is equally disavowed in favor of the social and cultural capital to be gained by association on equal terms with the British. In the text itself Belzoni tells us that he had more than one choice of Consul to whom to turn when in need of a *firman* (or permit) that would allow him to undertake his operations: "Being a native of that part of Italy which had lately come under the Austrian dominions, I might have applied to the Austrian consul, to obtain a firman from the Bashaw; but as I enjoyed the British protection, I applied to the British consul (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 102). As we have seen in the case of Nizzoli, Italians in Egypt were shrewd in choosing their national affiliations, and the fact that Belzoni had obtained British citizenship during his years in Great Britain made the choice seem all the more natural. Henry Salt himself took a dim view of what he termed Belzoni's "want of candour," and devoted a number of pages to documenting the transactions between them. Salt is equally vehement in his assertion that Belzoni was in effect a salaried employee.[56] Correspondence between Burckhardt and Salt supports the view that they

55 One notable exception to this occurs in his account of searching for mummies in Gournou, when Belzoni acknowledges the corruption resulting from the Europeans' intervention. The people, he writes, "build no houses. They would never take a spade in their hands, except when they go to dig for mummies, which they find to be more profitable than agriculture. This is the fault of travelers." Belzoni, *Narrative*, 169.

56 See J. J. Halls, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry Salt, Esq., F.R.S. &c* (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), 21.

considered themselves to be funding Belzoni's operations, whereas Belzoni represents their contributions as "presents." On his Second Journey, for example, he confesses that "my purse was but light, for very little remained of what I received as a present from Mr. Burckhardt, and the consul; and though it had been a little strengthened by the two statues I lately disposed of to the Count de Forbin" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 213). Shortly after this very confession, Belzoni refuses an infusion of cash from Salt: "The Consul, Mr. Salt, would have been kind enough to have paid all the expenses I had incurred in opening the pyramid, but this I positively refused, as I thought it would not be fair and right that he should pay for what he had nothing to do with" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 222). And even the economic transaction in which he "disposes" of statues in exchange for payment from the Count de Forbin is represented as a not-for-profit action: "What he paid me for them was not one fourth of their value; but I was fully satisfied, as I never was a dealer in statues in my life" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 210). The disavowal of an economic motive (precisely the sort of motive Belzoni attributes to almost every other actor in his narrative, including a Nubian *Kashif*, whose motives are characterized as "all mercenary" [116]) goes hand in hand with the importance of accruing social capital; indeed, such a disavowal would seem to be its condition of possibility.[57] I borrow the term "social capital" from the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, for whom it names "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition."[58] What Belzoni did hope to gain from Salt was an introduction to the Society of Antiquaries in London; he was networking in the desert, amassing social capital by delivering to the British Museum a trove of cultural capital unequalled to this day. Indeed, when he finally manages to remove the obelisk from Philae, which had been ceded by Salt to Mr. Bankes, Belzoni declares himself "pleased to have the opportunity of seeing another piece of antiquity on its way to England, as of obliging a gentleman for whom I had great regard" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 252). "To oblige a gentleman" perfectly captures the

57 I thus differ somewhat from Leask, who finds this relation to constitute a paradox: "Paradoxically, the same man who actively introduced wage capitalism to an Egyptian peasant work force, would only himself accept payment in the form of gifts." Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, 139.

58 See Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 119.

nature of this particular operation of Belzoni's: to bind and put under contract an upper-class Englishman in hopes of mutual recognition.

It is here that we can return to the question of national identity, understood as an affiliation with a language, geography, and culture. In Salt's view, Belzoni misrepresented not only the remuneration he received from him but the specificity of his Italian identity as well. Glossing the passage we have cited above, in which Belzoni mentioned that he could have applied to the Austrian consul, Salt wrote in 1821, after the publication of Belzoni's *Narrative*:

> These few lines contain a fair specimen of the candour to be met with throughout his work. In the first place, Mr. Belzoni knows that he studiously avoided letting it be known in Egypt that he was from the new Austrian dominions, and that he invariably represented himself to be a "Roman."[59]

Salt's assertion is corroborated by Belzoni's own description of himself as "of a Roman family" which happened to reside in Padua "for many years" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 85), and suggests that Belzoni was posing just a smidgen in laying claim to more prestigious origins. We might speculate, then, that it was Belzoni's concern with the acquisition of social capital that provides the explanation as to why Finati is never acknowledged as a "countryman." It is worth noting that others are: he welcomes the Chevalier Frediani as witness to his opening of the pyramid of Cephrene, and "was pleased to have a countryman of my own to be a witness of what passed on this important occasion" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 216). Frediani owed his title to his service in Napoleon's army, and Belzoni likely considered him to be the equal of the English aristocrats in whose company he traveled.[60] Not so Finati, renegade

59 Halls, *The Life*, 4.

60 Enegildo Frediani was himself of humble origins, but was accompanied in Egypt by the party of the Earl of Belmore, another of the English aristocrats making the tour of antiquities in this period. See Arturo Wolynski, "Il viaggiatore Enegildo Frediani," in *Bollettino della società geografica italiana* Serie II, IV (1891): 90–125. Wolynski adds to the suggestion that Belzoni was understood to be posing as Roman when he writes: "Il Frediani strinse allora l'amicizia col Belzoni, e, credendolo veramente romano, come egli generalmente si spacciava, nella lettera spedita al marchese Canova descrisse minutamente la tomba di Menefta I" (107) [Frediani struck up a friendship with Belzoni, and believing him to be truly Roman, as he generally passed himself off to be, he described the tomb of Merenptah I in great detail in a letter to Canova].

and deserter, whose acknowledgement would render no additional social capital whatsoever.

If Belzoni is something of a poseur – in the everyday sense of someone who is pretentious – however, he neither poses nor passes, in our terms; never is he tempted to disguise himself, except insofar as he had adopted local dress and wore his beard long (as did most European men who spent long periods of time in Islamicate cultures). When asked whether he would shave his beard upon returning to Europe, Belzoni emphatically declares "that no sooner should I reach the shore of my dear Europe than I should rid myself of it as a great burden" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 226). It is rather Mrs. Belzoni who takes up a temporary disguise when she travels to the Holy Land dressed as a man and enters the Temple of Solomon under that pretense. Belzoni, instead, recounts several episodes in which the behavior of the Europeans is mirrored back to them by the Egyptians themselves. A first concerns the topos of trinkets and baubles. On his First Journey Belzoni is approached by a local Ağa, who, "with the air of a man of great business," asks Belzoni whether he might be interested in purchasing a diamond. Intrigued, Belzoni insists upon inspecting the merchandise, which is produced with "great solemnity": "At last he opened the sanctum sanctorum. I took its contents in my hands with no small degree of expectation but: alas! How did I look, when I saw it was only part of the stopple of a common glass cruet, of the size of a hazel-nut, with two or three little gilt flowers on it!" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 143). One trinket for another: a lesson has been learned. It is difficult to know who is mocking whom; Belzoni insists mockingly upon the solemnity of the Ağa and his companions, noting that "they walked off in solemn silence, not without giving me an enquiring look, to hear whether I were really in earnest" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 143), but three other episodes suggest that the Europeans are being mocked as the behavior they model is mirrored back to them.

These episodes of mirroring return us to the questions of masquerade, mimicry, and identity that we momentarily put to the side as we examined the clash of economies in the desert. Both are recounted at the very beginning of Belzoni's narrative, and both take place as performances for the Pasha himself. The first takes place in the Pasha's garden residence at Soubra, in what is represented almost as a European court, in which the Pasha is nightly entertained by "buffoons":

> One of the buffoons of the Bashaw took it into his head one day, for a frolic, to shave his beard; which is no trifle among the Turks; for some of them, I really believe, would sooner have their head cut off than their

> beard: he borrowed some Franks' clothes of the Bashaw's apothecary, who was from Europe, and, after dressing himself in our costume, presented himself to the Bashaw as a European, who could not speak a single word of either Turkish or Arabic, which is often the case. Being in the dark, the Bashaw took him for what he represented himself to be, and sent immediately for the interpreter, who put some questions to him in Italian, which he did not answer; he was then questioned in French, but no reply; and next in the German and Spanish languages, and still he was silent: at last, when he saw that they were all deceived, the Bashaw not excepted, he burst out in plain Turkish, the only language he was acquainted with, and his well known voice told them who he was; for such was the change of his person, particularly by the cutting off his beard, that otherwise they could scarcely have recognized him. The Bashaw was delighted with the fellow; and, to keep up the frolic, gave him an order on the treasury for an enormous sum of money, and sent him to the Kaciabay, to present himself as a Frank, to receive it. (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 97)

Rather than growing a beard as part of a disguise, a beard is shorn; rather than a European passing as Muslim, a Muslim passes as Frank; rather than a display of linguistic ability, a display of linguistic ignorance: although it is of course difficult to know for certain what the Pasha might have found so humorous, this would seem to be a turning on its head the topos of masquerading as Muslim on the part of the European travelers.[61] The moment of the "linguistic test" occurs over and over in the accounts under examination in this chapter, and is here replayed as command performance and compensated in royal style. The delighted response of the Pasha suggests that he was well aware of the passing and posing taking place daily before him, and his order "to keep up the frolic" suggests a kind of counter-discourse to the miming of themselves that the Turks and Arabs witnessed in the likes of Burckhardt and other renegades. I would argue that the fact that it is framed as a theatrical performance differentiates it from the mimicry – not

61 Mary Roberts also argues that a counter-play emerges when Ottomans engage in cross-dressing to travesty the cultural cross-dressing of Westerns in the nineteenth century, specifically in relation to the stereotype of the Ottoman harem. See Roberts, "Cultural Crossings: Sartorial Adventures, Satiric Narratives, and the Question of Indigenous Agency in Nineteenth-Century Europe and the Near East," in *Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture*, ed. Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones and Mary Roberts (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 70–94.

quite white – that Bhabha has theorized; this is not a failed "whiteness" but a whiteness parodied in and as a social performance.

A second episode takes up not identity but economy, and is again recounted as a performance for the Pasha, featuring a "European traveler, who served as a sort of clown":

> He is in the dress of a Frank; and, on his travels, comes to the house of an Arab, who, though poor, wishes to have the appearance of being rich. Accordingly, he gives orders to his wife, to kill a sheep immediately. She pretends to obey; but returns in a few minutes, saying, that the flock has strayed away, and it would be the loss of too much time to fetch one. The host then orders four fowls to be killed; but these cannot be caught. A third time, he sends his wife for pigeons; but the pigeons are all out of their holes; and at last the traveler is treated only with sour milk and dhourra bread, the only provision in the house. (Belzoni, *Personal Narrative*, 99)

Belzoni does not comment on the reception of this little play, nor do we know through what translator he would have understood its content, since he is newly arrived to Egypt and does not claim to understand Turkish, the language spoken exclusively by Muhammad Ali and his entourage. The explanation that Belzoni offers of the premise – the Arab wishes to have the appearance of being rich – strikes me as not the only possible interpretation.[62] The scene itself, in which a Frank relies upon the local people for food, is repeated over and over again in the travel accounts we have been examining, and, as we have seen, what takes place is often an uneven exchange: trinkets and trifles for necessary provisions. The scene is here replayed from a different point of view: the play resembles a joke in its tripartite structure, and the Frank is clearly its butt. While it would be presumptuous to claim to have access to its full meaning in the context in which it was performed, we might contrast it to the episode that Burckhardt recounts, in which he plays the "Osmanlı" exploiting the hospitality of his Muslim host, knowing that his host would be obliged to meet his every demand. It is perhaps this obligation to be hospitable that is in play here, and the joke is on the Frank, who is shown a hospitality that is mere pretense, and hence resistant to exploitation. In other words, it appears to show husband and wife in cahoots in putting

62 Leask takes the play to be about "a shared fantasy of oriental opulence and the reality of poverty."

on a strategic show of hospitality that, in the end, gives the Frank only the barest of provisions and thereby resists precisely the sort of exploitation that Burckhardt had performed. In an inversion of the Orientalist trope of the Orient as a "theatrical stage affixed to Europe" (Said, *Orientalism*, 63), on which Europeans strut in disguise and hoodwink the natives, this is a stage on which the Frank himself is mocked and hoodwinked. Belzoni gives us but a flashing glance at this alternative stage.

A third and final example occurs in a tale told by Belzoni's erstwhile enemy Drovetti, and is perhaps the most enigmatic of all. On his Third Journey, Belzoni is given the task of transporting the obelisk he has already taken possession of in the name of the Consul Henry Salt from the Island of Philae to Alexandria. On this particular occasion, certain spots of ground have officially been ceded to Belzoni for his operations, and Drovetti accompanies him in order to learn which territories are now claimed by the British. Along the way, Drovetti tells "a pleasant story of a man who was dressed like myself, and who was hidden among the ruins of the temple" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 252). Although presented as "pleasant," the story seems to bear darker implications. Drovetti takes the "sham Belzoni" to be intended to deceive him, and when Belzoni asks him for what "reason that man could have for assuming my appearance. He said, that it was done to deceive him, and if he (the imposter) had done any thing bad, it was to make the people believe that it was myself who had done it" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 252). Belzoni perceives the menace, replying that if he were to be fired upon "they could have said after, that they mistook me for the person who had assumed my person in dress and figure" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 252). Leask interprets the story as allegorizing Belzoni's "legendary double persona" as both antiquarian and "colonial grave-robber" (Leask, *Curiosity*, 151), thus reading it more as literary invention than as actual event. Yet, in the context of the travel narrative, the "story" presumably refers to an actual event, as Drovetti confirms when he assures Belzoni that "that person was sent away from Thebes, and would not return again" (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 253) Here, again, we have no access to the possible motivations behind the posing, but we can speculate that it offers another example of that alternative stage in which Muslims pose as Franks. A "sham Belzoni" who could do "any thing bad" could only further trouble the already strained relationship between the British and French Consuls in their competition for antiquities.

Richard F. Burton, Shaykh Abdullah

Lest we fall into the trap of creating a timeless Orient, it is worth pausing a moment to take stock of what has changed between the first two decades of the nineteenth century, when Finati, Burckhardt, and Belzoni were active, and mid-century, when Burton makes his pilgrimage in 1853. War with the Ottomans in 1839 led to European military intervention and to the London treaty of 1840, which required Muhammad Ali to reduce his army and to accept a commercial convention that banned monopolies in the Ottoman Empire.[63] Thus, by the 1840s, Egypt had become part of the European world system, responding to trade and economic pressures from Europe rather than to internal and Ottoman pressures. Luxury steamers had been introduced and regular steamship lines established in the Mediterranean. Hotels and guidebooks were available for European travelers. As Nigel Leask has noted, the rise of commodified tourism, improved technologies of travel, and consolidation of European power changed the nature of travel writing: "travel books were evacuated of scientific or scholarly specificity, and frequently came to privilege authorial 'egotism' and entertaining reflections, often motivated by pious, patriotic, and imperialistic ideologies."[64] Richard Francis Burton's *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* fully fits the bill, opening as it does under the long shadow cast by his ego:

> Many may not follow my example; but some perchance will be curious to see what measures I adopted in order to appear suddenly as an Eastern upon the stage of Oriental life; and as the recital may be found useful by future adventurers, I make no apology for the egotistical semblance of the narrative.[65]

The narrative, then, is a recital in several senses: the repetition of his journey in narrative form, the narrative itself, and a performance before an audience of readers. Said's powerful characterization of Orientalism's practice of representation as a theatrical one, in which the Orient itself is imagined as a "theatrical stage affixed to Europe" (Said, *Orientalism*, 63) finds in Burton

63 For a succinct account of Muhammad Ali's reign, see F. Robert Hunter, *Egypt Under the Khedives 1805–1879: From Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984), 14–32.

64 Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, 7.

65 Burton, *Personal Narrative*, I, 4–5.

perhaps its most literal enactment. Burton is, at every moment, the star of the show, the center of attention even when, for the purposes of "passing," he should by all logic be at its periphery. The theatricality of his impersonation has garnered him a great deal more attention among biographers and critics than has been granted his predecessors Finati and Burckhardt.[66] Several critics have drawn attention to the implications of Burton's theatricality for an understanding of the identities he stages so flamboyantly, and can help us to open up the question of passing and posing in Burton's case. Parama Roy, for example, has astutely observed that the narrator of the pilgrimage is both a voyeur and an exhibitionist who "is never content to be inconspicuous, to be one of the crowd" (Roy, *Indian Traffic*, 29). For Roy, this self-dramatization exists in a dialectical relationship with anxieties about "native insurgency" (Roy, *Indian Traffic*, 32), anxieties that derive more directly from Burton's experience in colonial India but that are mapped onto para-colonial Egypt, which he quite openly (and, it must be said, correctly) imagines may one day be occupied by the British. Roy argues that Englishness, in Burton's practice of disguise, is supposed to be immune to his trafficking of identities, even if it consists somewhat paradoxically in "nothing other than the capacity for the impersonation of non-Englishness" (Roy, *Indian Traffic*, 32). Daniel Bivona goes further than this, arguing that Burton's practice of masquerade brings him to the brink of an insight, never consciously articulated, that "nationality is a space in a network of differences," rather than an essence.[67] Bivona's argument is based on an analysis of Burton's "half and half" identity, so it is to that identity that we now turn.

Burton begins his voyage from London to Alexandria as Mirza ("Mr." in Persian, he tells us) Abdullah, a Persian Darwaysh, an identity he had already adopted at Sind where he had been sent with the 18th Bombay Native infantry and where he had spent the years from 1843 to 1849. A month in Alexandria, however, reveals this identity to be a "mistake," and he changes his title to "Shaykh" (chief, or leader), thereby suggesting he is a local notable. Roy identifies the mistake in question as that of having taken on a Shia identity and consequently being considered a heretic by the Sunni majority.

66 See Bishop, "The Identities of Sir Richard Burton," 119–35, and Indira Ghose, "Imperial Player: Richard Burton in the Sindh," in *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces*, ed. Tim Youngs (New York: Anthem Press, 2006), 71–86.

67 Daniel Bivona, *Desire and Contradiction; Imperial Visions and Domestic Debates in Victorian Literature* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 40.

It is in fact upon the advice of a fellow-voyager by the name of Hajji Wali, a Russian, who warns him that "in Egypt you will be cursed, in Arabia you will be beaten because you are a heretic," that Burton "laid aside the Darwaysh's gown, the large blue pantaloons, and the short shirt; in fact all connection with Persia and the Persians" (Burton, *Scinde*, I, 44). Burton himself notes that the consequences of this mistake dogged him throughout his journey, in spite of his work to correct it.[68] Adapting his impersonation in bits and pieces, Burton arrives at a solution:

> After long deliberation about the choice of nations, I became a "Pathán." Born in India of Afghan parents who had settled in the country, educated at Rangoon, and set out to wander, as men of that race frequently are, from early youth, I was well guarded against the danger of detection by a fellow countryman. (Burton, *Scinde*, I, 45)

Like Burckhardt's "somewhat Syrian" disguise, Burton conceives of this identity as a means to ward off detection, reducing the likelihood that he might encounter his equal. (As it happens, he will later meet a fellow Pathan, and exult in his success). The choice of this particular identity has been glossed in several ways. Roy has suggested that it allowed Burton to depend "on local ignorance of the 'real thing'," and to position him everywhere as liminal, both "familiar and alien."[69] The historian Dane Kennedy usefully contextualizes this pose, reminding us that Burton could succeed in this particular role not so much because of local ignorance as "because it was carried out in an environment where the traditional forces that bound person to place were undermined both by the destabilizing effects of British imperials and by the cosmopolitan influence of the Muslim pilgrimage

68 On board the pilgrim ship 'the Golden Wire,' bound for Yambo (the port of Medina) across the Red Sea, Burton breathes a sigh of relief as he takes leave of Egypt in July 1853: "As the 'Golden Wire' started from her place, I could not help casting one wistful look upon the British flag floating over the Consulate. But the momentary regret was stifled by the heart-bounding which prospects of an adventure excite, and by the real pleasure of leaving Egypt. I had lived there a stranger in the land, and a hapless life it had been: in the streets every man's face, as he looked upon the Persian, was the face of a foe. Whenever I came in contact with the native officials, insolence marked the event; and the circumstances of living within hail of my fellow-countrymen, and yet finding it impossible to enjoy their society, still throws a gloom over the memory of my first sojourn in Egypt." Burton, *Personal Narrative*, I, 194–95.

69 Roy, *Indian Traffic*, 32.

itself."[70] The pilgrimage, Kennedy reminds us, "attracted pilgrims from such varied corners of the *dar al-Islam*" that "variations of speech, dress and customs" were the norm, rather than the exception.[71] We have already seen this cosmopolitan influence of the pilgrimage in Burchkardt's characterization of Mecca as a place of "perfect ease" for the European who passes, and the choice of an identity that is itself a traveling fiction – of Afghan origin, born in India, educated in Rangoon – is a condensed example of that cosmopolitanism. From that point of view, his identity might be understood less as always liminal and unknowable than as camouflage that adopts the colors of the local norm of the pilgrimage. This, at least, is the pragmatic side of such an identity. But the theatricality of the pose suggests that a psychic investment is also present, returning us to one of Said's seminal questions concerning the liminality of the European in the Orient; if to be a European in the Orient is always to be "a consciousness set apart" from its surroundings, then "the main thing to note is the intention of this consciousness: What is it in the Orient for?"[72]

Postcolonial scholar Ben Grant offers a psychoanalytically informed answer to that question in *Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton: Power Play of Empire*, where he traces a genealogy of "Abdullah," an identity first introduced in the 1852 *Falconry in the Valley of the Indus*, and which Grant describes as Burton's "alter ego." Grant notes that Burton's investment in this figure spilled beyond the pages of his texts; he "compulsively signed letters to his friends with the signature of Abdullah, written in Arabic," a signature that is reproduced in the *Personal Narrative*, where Burton recounts having scribbled it on the wall of Kubbat al-Sanaya, a spot where the Prophet stopped to pray in Medina.[73] Grant proposes to speak of Burton's split

70 Dane Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 72.

71 Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man*, 64.

72 Said, *Orientalism*, 157.

73 Burton, *Personal Narrative*, I, 432. Burton defends such graffiti, noting that "We English wanderers are beginning to be shamed out of our 'vulgar' habit of scribbling names and nonsense in noted spots. Yet the practice is both classical and Oriental. The Greeks and Persians left their marks everywhere; and the paws of the Sphinx bear scratches which, being interpreted, are found to be the same manner of trash as that written upon the remains of Thebes in A.D. 1879." Belzoni himself left his mark in the burial chamber of the Pyramid of Cephrene, "Scoperta da G. Belzoni, 2 Marzo 1818," which Alberto Siliotti reports is still legible. (Belzoni, *Narrative*, 329, fn 153. But the best graffiti story of all concerns Chateaubriand; not having time to visit the pyramids, as Deborah Manley and Peta Rée tell it, "Chateaubriand had requested another Frenchman to inscribe his name, 'according to the history of those prodigious

identity (Abdullah/Burton) not in terms of the hybridity that has become a dominant paradigm in postcolonial studies but rather in the psychoanalytic theorization of the "graft" and the "crypt." Drawing especially on Jaques Derrida's introduction to Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, Grant argues that, in Burton's case, the lost object that is retained intact through incorporation in the graft or crypt is his friend Ibrahim Khan. "Abdullah" would name Burton's libidinal ties to that Muslim friend, now disavowed, and so function as the "magical cure" that allows Burton to retain the upper hand in his relation to the "natives." Grant writes:

> Through adopting the persona and name of Abdullah, Burton, magically, does not have to choose between one side and another, one religion and another, one dress and another, one skin colour and another, but can now authentically appear on both sides of the border at once, as Burton and as Abdullah.[74]

Burton-the-actor-on-the-stage, the one in disguise, now seeks to "bury alive the body of his friendship," and the change of title from Mirza to Shaykh, Grant argues, makes it "more and more impossible for this alter ego to assert itself as an alternative self, an alternative site of enunciation and belief."[75] Theatricality, in Grant's argument, is thus the symptomatic assertion of a belief in an unfragmented subjectivity despite proof to the contrary in Burton's own psychic make-up: for Grant, the identification with, and desire for, Ibrahim Khan lie encrypted in his unconscious, and split his ego in a way familiar to us from the "Ich Spaltung" that characterizes the fetishist. To translate it into the terms of passing and posing, the supposed "unfragmented subjectivity" that Roy posits as a core that is immune to the trafficking in poses would instead, for Grant, be a crucial element of the pose itself.

tombs, for I like to fulfill all the duties of a pious traveler.'" Another of the Englishmen touring Egypt at the same time as Belzoni and Salt, Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzclarence, reported in 1818 that he saw on the great Pyramid "several French names with the date, An. 9, of the republic. I also saw that of Chateaubriand, and somebody has taken the pains to engrave under "il n'étoit pas ici," which I was assured is really the fact." See Manley and Rée, 287, fn 17, and Lieutenant Fitzclarence, *Journal of A Route across India, through Egypt, to England, in the Latter End of the Year 1817, and the Beginning of 1818* (London: John Murray, 1819), 457.

74 Ben Grant, *Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton: Power Play of Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 68.

75 Grant, *Postcolonialism*, 69, 71.

Acknowledging and building on the fine analyses that both Roy and Grant have done of Burton, I would like to take yet another look at Burton's posing, and the combination of voyeur and exhibitionist that both have seen in him. A quick detour through Freud may provide a new direction. Reflections on exhibitionism and scopophilia are scattered throughout Freud's *oeuvre* but his most concentrated theorization appears in *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*, where the relation between scopophilia and exhibitionism is offered in illustration of one possible vicissitude: namely, the reversal of an instinct into its opposite. This reversal affects only the aim: activity is replaced by passivity. In typical fashion, Freud outlines sequential stages, only to conclude that all stages exist side by side: in this case, the first stage posits scopophilia as an activity directed towards an extraneous object; in a second stage, the object is given up and the scopophilic instinct is turned toward a part of the subject's own body. Exhibitionism thus includes looking at one's own body, and Freud specifies that the exhibitionist "shares in the enjoyment of [the sight of] his exposure."[76] But there is a third stage that is of special interest to us, since it requires the "introduction of a new subject to whom one displays oneself in order to be looked at by him."[77] This new subject is a necessary part of the scenario, and may open up a new direction in our reading. Burton, I want to argue, figures that "new subject" in the *Personal Narrative* in the character of "the boy Mohammed," who accompanies him to Mecca and who knows that he is not what he seems. Mohammed is the figure for the reader who knows that Burton is posing, knows that his is an act; in other words, an apparent "failure to pass" is necessary so that the exhibitionist may share in the enjoyment of his exposure. Migrating the stages Freud outlines to the Orientalist field, we might say that it is as though the scopophilia originally directed at the harem and its occupants, having encountered a prohibition, were now redirected to Mecca and the person of the impersonator himself.

It is worth remembering that the subterfuge that Burton adopted was not, as Kennedy reminds us and Burton himself acknowledges, strictly speaking necessary. He could have entered Mecca as a devout British Muslim; he could have "turned Turk." Kennedy suggests that Burton's decision not to do so might have been motivated by his desire to compete with Burckhardt, to do

76 Sigmund Freud, *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: the Hogarth Press, 1957) (rpt. 1986), Vol. XIV, 127. Brackets in the original.

77 Freud, *Instincts*, 129. Freud then specifies that all stages of scopophilia exist alongside each other.

him one better precisely by not converting, as well as by a reluctance to be placed "beyond the pale of respectable society," and thus "to extinguish any prospect of making a name for himself as a national hero."[78] Burton himself puts it this way, addressing what he stages as his reader's query:

> The home reader naturally enquires, Why not travel under your English name? For this reason. In the generality of the barbarous countries you must either proceed, like Bruce, preserving the "dignity of manhood," and carrying matters with high hand, or you must worm your way by timidity and subservience; in fact, by becoming an animal too contemptible for man to let or injure. But to pass through the Moslem's Holy Land, you must either be a born believer, or have become one; in the former case, you may demean yourself as you please, in the latter a path is already prepared for you. My spirit could not bend to own myself a *Burmá*, a renegade – to be pointed at and shunned and catechised, an object of suspicion to the many and of contempt to all. Moreover, it would have obstructed the aim of my wanderings. The convert is always watched with Argus eyes, and men do not willingly give information to a "new Moslem," especially a Frank: they suspect his conversion to be feigned or forced, look upon him as a spy, and let him see as little of life as possible. (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, I, 22–23)

Fresh from a reading of Burckhardt as we are, and aware as Burton was of his predecessor's account, this representation seems less to reflect the life of the renegade than to set the desired stage for the performance of the exhibitionist: through *dénégation*, Burton seems to be saying: "Ah, to be watched with Argus eyes, pointed at, observed by the many and the all!" The next few pages describe in detail what Burton calls the "necessaries" for his trip, as our actor collects props and wardrobe, few of which would have been "necessary" had Burton converted, and sets out on his voyage. To translate it into the terms of passing and posing: Burton declares his goal to be one of passing, but his setup seems to suggest that this is, indeed, already part of the pose. In other words, his "passing" should be admired for the simulation that it is, and, in order for that to take place, he must occasionally "fail." To truly pass would defeat the purpose, for not even Argus eyes would detect him and appreciate his talent. In an early essay on Burton as actor, Jonathan Bishop seems to have

78 Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man*, 65.

captured something of this dynamic between passing and posing, which he conceived of as a double bind:

> the more expert he became in his part, the more special lore he accumulated and put to practice, the more chances he willingly took of ignominious or dangerous exposure. We get an impression of a man momentarily fearful lest his English self be *too* well concealed, and therefore flirting with self-exposure.[79]

What is striking about Bishop's insight is that he locates Burton's fear not on the side of exposure but rather on the side of concealment: he *fears* passing. Implicit in his logic is an acknowledgement that desire lies in the exposure with which he flirts.[80] Equally necessary for the performance, then, is an audience; theatricality, after all, implies an orientation toward a beholder.

Burton is not content to allow his eventual readers to perform that role, but rather builds into his narratives surrogates for them. The most conspicuous example is that of "Mr. John Bull," the reader-as-character addressed in the second person singular in the 1852 *Scinde, or, The Unhappy Valley*. A caricature of the respectable, stodgy, Victorian reader, Mr. Bull is a "dear, fat, old, testy, but very unblood-thirsty *papa de famille*," the literary creation of the reader to whom Burton, Victorian Bad Boy, will expose himself.[81] Mr. Bull is the representative of "You England-English," a "man of peculiar piety and of strictness conversation" who, for example, dares not partake of opium, as does Burton, the cosmopolitan "Ruffian Dick" who peppers his prose with *bons mots* in French and learned quotations in Italian.[82] Mr. Bull makes no appearance in the *Personal Narrative*; the beholder here is embodied not in a stodgy Englishman but in a sly Muslim, a "Meccan boy, Mohammed

79 Bishop, "The Identities of Sir Richard Burton," 121–22.

80 This is not the logic that Bishop goes on to espouse, reverting instead to a more commonplace view that "Such a procedure could perform a double duty. If he was not discovered, he could feel renewed satisfaction in the efficacy of his lore, and consequently a renewed sense of the self the lore expressed; if exposure did befall him, his actual self, the concealed essence behind the theatricalities, would stand out naked, not merely in the eyes of a hostile world, but in his own" (122). For some exhibitionists, of course, standing out naked is precisely the point.

81 Richard F. Burton, *Scinde, or, The Happy Valley* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), I, 4.

82 Richard F. Burton, *Scinde, or, The Happy Valley* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), II, 147. Jonathan Bishop writes that "Burton wished to be 'Ruffian Dick' and at the same time be loved by the world he shocked" (125).

al-Basyúni," to whom Burton refers in his account as "the boy Mohammed" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, I, 123).

It is from "the boy Mohammed" that Burton purchases his *ihram*, the required clothing of the pilgrim; it is he who accompanies him throughout the pilgrimage, and it is at his mother's house that Burton will dwell at Mecca. At first Burton finds him unsuitable as a companion, on account of the "signs of over-wisdom" that he displays, but quickly has a change of heart. Burton introduces him with a finely drawn portrait:

> He is a beardless youth, of about eighteen, chocolate-brown, with high features, and a bold profile; his bony and decidedly Meccan cast of face is lit up by the peculiar Egyptian eye, which seems to descend from generation to generation. His figure is short and broad, with a tendency to be obese, the result of a strong stomach and the power of sleeping at discretion. He can read a little, write his name, and is uncommonly clever at a bargain. Meccah had taught him to speak excellent Arabic, to understand the literary dialect, to be eloquent in abuse, and to be profound at Prayer and Pilgrimage. Constantinople had given him a taste for Anacreontic singing, and female society of the questionable kind, a love of strong waters, – the hypocrite looked positively scandalized when I first suggested the subject – and an off-hand latitudinarian mode of dealing with serious subjects in general. I found him to be the youngest son of a widow, whose doting fondness had moulded his disposition; he was selfish and affectionate, as spoiled children usually are, volatile, easily offended and as easily pacified (the Oriental), coveting other men's goods and profuse of his own (the Arab), with a matchless intrepidity of countenance (the traveler), brazen lunged, not more than half brave, exceedingly astute, with an acute sense of honour, especially where his relations were concerned (the individual). (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, I, 124–25)

Mohammed appears to be the exemplar of a kind of Meccan cosmopolitanism, fully the match for Burton's European version, although the Meccan version is predictably cast as a hodge-podge of native virtues and vices, rather than the elegant worldliness that Burton affects. Exceedingly astute, "the boy Mohammed" finds Burton out in the Caravanserai very soon after joining it. Burton allows his companions to inspect his belongings, including his sextant; this, he writes, was "a mistake. The boy Mohammed, I afterwards learned, waited only my leaving the room to declare that the would-be Haji was one

of the Infidels from India" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, I, 167). A council is formed to discuss the case, but the accusation is dismissed. So Burton tells us. But what is odd here is the metaleptic relation between cause and effect: Burton decides "with a sigh, to leave it [the sextant] behind" immediately after the episode, about which, however, he claims to have learned only later, upon his return to Cairo (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, I, 168).[83] That is to say, the cause for his action in the narrative past (leaving the sextant behind) is a knowledge he claims to have acquired only in the narrative future, as sure a sign of disavowal as one could want. The point is not to show that, if Burton left the sextant behind, it must have been because Burton-the-traveler knew of the suspicion it had actually created in "the boy Mohammed," but rather that Burton-the-narrator's psychic investment in posing requires an audience that is in the know: in this case, "the boy Mohammed's" "suspicion" is the desired, and indeed necessary, accompaniment to his masquerade. He almost admits as much when he refers to this episode as having "aroused the only suspicion about me ever expressed during the summer's tour" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, I, 166). "The boy Mohammed" and his "over-wisdom" take up the position of this necessary knowledge; he is the secret sharer in Burton's exposure.

Equally necessary are Burton's "flirtations with self-exposure"; periodic failures to pass are necessary for the enjoyment – both his and ours – of his exposure. Several episodes stand out for Burton's exhibitions of "nonchalance" and bravado. "Nonchalance" appears for the first time as his goal early in the pilgrimage. Having survived the sea journey and arrived at Yambo, Burton is lodged with a family of Circassians whose male members were

> distinguished only by a peculiar surliness of countenance; perhaps their expression was the result of their suspecting me; for I observed them narrowly watching every movement during *Wuzu* and prayers. This was a good opportunity for displaying the perfect *nonchalance* of a True Believer; and my efforts were, I believe successful, for afterwards they seemed to treat me as a mere stranger, from whom they could expect nothing, and who therefore was hardly worth their notice. (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, I, 230)

83 Dane Kennedy wonders why the members of the party did not act upon "the boy Mohammed's" accusation, and speculates that Burton may have been subsidizing their journey, and they therefore had no incentive to expose him. See Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man*, 73–74.

"Observing them watching me" nicely encapsulates the exhibitionist's desire to share in the sight of his own exposure. *Nonchalance* will henceforth characterize Burton's near-failures to pass, his teetering on the edge of exposure. On the final approach to Mecca, the Caravan comes under attack by robbers whose object is plunder and who fire upon the camels. Burton sees in the occasion another opportunity for a display of *nonchalance*:

> At the beginning of the skirmish I had primed my pistols, and sat with them ready for use. But soon seeing that there was nothing to be done, and wishing to make an impression, – nowhere does Bobadil now "go down" as well as in the East, – I called aloud for my supper. Shaykh Nur, exanimate with fear, could not move. The boy Mohammed ejaculated only an "Oh, sir!" and the Shaykh Abdullah, the Meccan, being a man of spirit, was amused by the spectacle. "Are these Afghan manners, Effendim?" he enquired from the Shugduf behind me. "Yes," I replied aloud, "in my country we always dine before an attack of robbers, because that gentry is in the habit of sending men to bed supperless." The Shaykh laughed aloud, but those around him looked offended. I thought the bravado this time *mal placé*; but a little event which took place on my way to Jeddah proved that it was not quite a failure. (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 145)

Not only does "the boy Mohammed" appear in this first episode, but it is he who will put it to use in the later event, which Burton recounts as an "example of what bravado can do in Arabia" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 264). Returning from Mecca to Jeddah, Burton and Mohammed stop during the night (the usual time the caravans travels) for a nap in the desert; other members of the party object, urging them to rise and remount. Burton resists, and pretends to snore, while "the boy Mohammed" recalls his employer's flaunting nonchalance:

> "Do you know," he whispered in awful accents, "what *that* person is?" and he pointed to me. "Why, no," replied the others. "Well," said the youth, "the other day the Utaybah showed us death in the Zaribah Pass, and what do you think he did?" "Wallah! What do we know!" exclaimed the Egyptian, "What *did* he do?" "He called for – his dinner," replied the youth, with a slow and sarcastic emphasis. That trait was enough. The others mounted, and left us quietly to sleep. (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 263)

"The boy Mohammed" is at once complicit with Burton's bravado, wielding it in defense of Burton, and bearer of the suspicion that is necessary to his exploit. It makes ideological sense, then, that "the boy Mohammed" should be featured again at the end of his account, and that he should both denounce the imposture and affirm its effectiveness. In the first episode to be recounted, Mohammed takes his leave of Burton "with a coolness for which [he] could not account" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 271), until he learns that Mohammed has exposed him to one of his servants: "'Now, I understand,' said the boy Mohammed to his fellow-servant, 'your master is a Sahib from India; he hath laughed at our beards'" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 271).[84] His departure from Burton's voyage (at Jeddah, as Burton awaits a steamer to return him to Cairo) does not coincide with a departure from Burton's narrative; a brief episode involving "the boy Mohammed" is the final one in the two volumes and over 700 pages of his *Personal Narrative*. The two visit the grave of Eve, "Mother of mankind," and Burton notes that the guardian of the graveyard is inordinately respectful upon greeting him, and inordinately greedy upon their leaving. The reason is explained by "the boy Mohammed":

> On leaving the graveyard I offered the guardian a dollar, which he received with a remonstrance that a man of my dignity should give so paltry a fee. Nor was he at all contented with the assurance that nothing more could be expected from an Afghan Darwaysh, however pious. Next day the boy Mohammed explained the man's *empressement* and disappointment, – I had been mistaken for the Pasha of Al-Madinah. (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 275–76)

Once again a metalepsis structures the relation between two episodes; the first to be recounted takes place after the second to be recounted. As a result, we are led to assume that Mohammed, stand-in for us as readers, "knows" the truth of Burton's disguise, namely that he is a Sahib posing as a Sayyid; it is from the position of knowledge that Mohammed is the witness of Burton's final triumph, to have "passed" for the Pasha of Medina. What "the boy Mohammed," and we as readers, must then admire is precisely the simulation of the pose.

84 Ben Grant reads "the boy Mohammed" as figuring the voice of Burton's alter ego, Abdullah, "asserting himself to accuse Burton of fraud and betrayal," a convincing interpretation within the terms of his overall argument. See Grant, *Postcolonialism*, 81.

On at least one occasion, Burton's *nonchalance* seems to be oriented as much toward the reader as toward the actors in the diegetic world around him. Housed in "the boy Mohammed's" mother's residence in Mecca, Burton finds the "place of retirement" on which he had insisted to be invaded by other lodgers:

> I had scarcely composed myself upon the carpeted Mastabah, when the remainder was suddenly invaded by the Turkish, or rather Slavo-Turk, pilgrims inhabiting the house, and a host of their visitors. They were large, hairy men, with gruff voices and square figures; they did not take the least notice of me, although feeling the intrusion, I stretched out my legs with a provoking *nonchalance*. (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 171)

To which he adds a footnote "This is equivalent to throwing oneself upon the sofa in Europe." It is something that Oscar Wilde's Lord Henry might do, in a fit of upper-class *ennui*. One might say that Burton is posing doubly in this moment: as Muslim pilgrim asserting his privilege in the diegetic world, a self-assertion addressed to the Turks and to "the boy Mohammed," and as Englishman displaying his pedigree in the footnote addressed to the reader. In this respect, Burton's disguise is always at least double: if he is a Sahib posing as a Sayyid for "the boy Mohammed," he also wishes to be a Muslim posing as an Englishman for his English readers. This latter reading would be in line with Ben Grant's argument that Burton's Muslim identity was "encrypted as 'Abdullah,'" as well as with Roy's observation that Burton also wanted to "have it suspected in England that he had actually gone native" (Roy, *Indian Traffic*, 30). A double audience is necessary for such a double disguise.

One final remark on Burton's pilgrimage is in order. If Burton's adoption of "Mr. John Bull" as reader is meant to suggest that he himself stands outside of, and can manipulate, national stereotypes, he also tumbles back into the very stereotype he critiques at the culmination of his pilgrimage. Burton ridicules Mr. Bull for his inability to distinguish between the European Grand Tour and his voyage to Sind, instructing him to "extract Bombay from the Bay of Naples."[85] But Burton himself has difficulty in extracting Mecca and the Ka'ba from a Grand Tour aesthetic template. Having arrived

85 Richard F. Burton, *Goa and the Blue Mountains; or Six Months of Sick Leave*, introduction by Dane Kennedy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 5–6. I owe my knowledge of this quotation to Grant, *Postcolonialism*, 13.

at Mecca, he notes that the large quantity of pigeons, "resembling those of Venice" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 174); looking north to the Meccan hill of Abu Qubays, he recalls that "some writers liken it to Florence; but conceive a Florence without beauty!" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 173). At the Ka'ba itself, the template intrudes: "the windowless stone walls and the choked-up door made it worse than the Piombi of Venice" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 209). Burton enters the Ka'ba and professes a moment of fear: "I will not deny that, looking at the windowless walls, the officials at the door, and the crowd of excited fanatics below – 'and the place death, considering who I was,' – my feelings were of the trapped-rat description" (Burton, *Personal Narrative*, II, 207). If the "trapped-rat description" is regularly cited in the scholarship, the embedded quotation is not. Burton has borrowed and revised for his purposes Juliet's warning to Romeo, upon discovering that he has scaled the orchard walls: "And the place death, considering who thou art."[86] We are thus transported to Shakespeare's Verona, here in the holiest of all places in *dar al-Islam*. Burton, who was to spend the last two decades of his life as British Consul in Trieste, where he died in 1890, was not himself immune to Mr. John Bull's Grand-Tourism.

86 The original lines appear in Scene 2, Act 2 of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: "How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?/The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,/ And the place death, considering who thou art,/If any of my kinsmen find thee here."

CHAPTER FOUR

Muslim in Milan: The Orientalisms of Leda Rafanelli

Cultural cross-dressing and conversion to Islam were practices at once strategic and practical: many Westerners who spent any amount of time in the Middle East adopted local dress the better to accomplish their ends, whether scholarly or commercial, and conversion to Islam was in some cases similarly profitable. As we have seen, both cultural cross-dressing and the topos of "turning Turk" raise anxieties about the relation of exteriority and psychic interiority. To what extent can identities be assumed strategically, donned and taken off at will? Did those Christian converts to Islam – the *rinnegati* who "turned Turk" – merely assume the "external practices" of one religion while maintaining belief in another "in their hearts," as the Catholic Church itself had sanctioned through the tribunals of the Roman Inquisition? This latter notion functioned as a discursive rescue operation making it possible to reclaim the Christian through an insistence that psychic interiority be strictly separable from the "merely" exterior. By the same token, the practices of passing and posing as Muslim, practices to which cultural cross-dressing was integral, informed performances as skillful as that of Richard Frances Burton, who entered Mecca as a non-believer, or as successful as that of the lesser-known Italian, Giovanni Finati, who entered Mecca as the Muslim Mahomet. In this chapter I turn to a rather different case of cultural cross-dressing and conversion to Islam, that of Leda Rafanelli (1880–1971). The stage upon which she posed was that of twentieth-century Milan, and the audience for her posing was, on the one hand, a small readership made up mostly of fellow anarchists and, on the other, the camera itself. Unlike those of her nineteenth-century predecessors, Rafanelli's "ethnomasquerade" was performed with promise of neither commercial profit

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nor the thrill of transgressive passing on sacred ground.[1] And, unlike other cross-cultural cross-dressing female travelers, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Grace Ellison, and Isabelle Eberhardt, Rafanelli did not favor the *şalvar* (the divided skirt widely referred to by Westerners as "harem pants") that was associated with freedom from strictures of femininity, both physical and social, but rather combined an "Egyptian" aesthetic with a "Gypsy" overlay that emphasized an Orientalized femininity.

Autodidact and anarchist, Leda Rafanelli embraced rather than refused the topos of "turning turk" that had characterized the writing of Italian travelers in the nineteenth century. During a three-month trip to Egypt in 1900, Rafanelli frequented the circle of Italo-Egyptian anarchists soon to be associated with Enrico Pea's "Baracca Rossa." Little is known about the motivations for the voyage; existing scholarship, which is scant in itself, hints at some unspecified family misfortune that led to Rafanelli being sent to stay with an uncle, already an emigrant to Alexandria.[2] What we do know is that, as a result of her stay, she underwent both a political and religious conversion. Unlike her fellow and more famous co-nationals residing in Alexandria, Giuseppe Ungaretti and Enrico Pea, Rafanelli converted to Islam and took up the study of Arabic (on the basis of a formal education that ended with the *terza elementare*). As far as I have been able to tell, there is no published or unpublished narrative account of her conversion to Islam.[3] By all reports, she respected the five pillars of Islam, with the exception of the pilgrimage

1 Kader Konuk refers to the cross-cultural cross-dressing of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Julia Pardoe, and Grace Ellison as "ethnomasquerade" in "Ethnomasquerade in Ottoman-European Encounters: Reenacting Lady Mary Wortley Montagu," *Criticism* 46:3 (2004): 393–414. Konuk helpfully sums up the practice: "For European travelers, ethnomasquerade is a long-standing travel practice, a tool for amateur ethnographers, a common practice in travel photography, and a textual strategy in travel literature" (407).

2 See Antonietta D'Aniello, "Le scritture della politica: storia e finzione nell'opera di Leda Rafanelli (1870–1971)," *Critica letteraria* XXVII:104 (1999): 572.

3 Enrico Ferri writes that "non ci sono documenti e testimonianze chiari – la stessa Rafanelli non ce li ha forniti – che ci diano informazioni sui modi e sulle origini di questa conversione; quali incontri l'abbiano favorita, quali aspetti dell'Islam abbiano suscitato un richiamo maggiore di altri." [there are no clear documents or testimonies – Rafanelli herself didn't provide any – that give us information about the mode and origin of this conversion: what encounters might have favored it, what aspects of Islam exerted more appeal than others]. See his "Leda Rafanelli: un anarchismo islamico," in *Leda Rafanelli tra letteratura e anarchia*, ed. Fiamma Chessa (Comune di Reggio Emilia: Archivio Famiglia Berneri – Aurelio Chessa, 2007), 151. This volume contains the most complete bibliography on Rafanelli to date as well as the photographs to which I refer here.

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to Mecca: the profession that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger; ritual prayer five times a day; the giving of alms, and fasting during Ramadan. Similarly, the study of Arabic for a non-Arab Muslim is considered to be a devotional practice. Indeed, Rafanelli spent the rest of her long life fashioning a pro-Islamic voice in her novels, short stories, and memoirs, as well as an Orientalizing persona in her dress, habits, and interior decoration.[4] The latter is most conspicuously on display in photographs for which she posed in the early decades of the century, and in two texts that recount her flirtation with the young, and still Socialist, Mussolini, on the eve of the First World War: the 1946 *Una donna e Mussolini* (A Woman and Mussolini), a partially epistolary account containing letters from Mussolini, and the 1921 *Incantamento* (Enchantment), a fictionalized account published under the pseudonym Sahra. Her pro-Islamic voice, instead, can be heard most loudly in her anti-colonialist novel, *L'oasi. Romanzo arabo* (The Oasis: An Arab Novel), also written under a pseudonym. Published in 1929, its title page presents Rafanelli as the translator of a supposedly French novel written by the apparently non-existent author Etienne Gamalier (by 1929, Rafanelli had good reason to fear censure from the fascist regime, as we will see in a moment). These three works represent only a fraction of Rafanelli's prolific output, and exclude her propagandist writing – antimilitarist, anticlerical, anti-authoritarian, in defense of workers, against schools and prisons; other works include the novel *Seme nuovo* (New Seed) from 1911, the short story collections *Bozzetti Sociali* (Social Sketches), also from 1911, and *Donne e femmine* (Women and Females), from 1921, and tracts with clearly political intent, such as the 1907 *Contro la scuola* (Against Schools), the 1907 *Valide braccia: Opuscolo contro la costruzione di nuovi carceri* (Strong Arms: Pamplet against the Construction of New Prisons), and the more widely diffused 1915 *Abbasso la Guerra* (Down with War). In this chapter the autobiographical fictions, *Incantamento* and *Una donna e Mussolini*, the novel *L'oasi. Romanzo arabo*, and the collection *Donne e femmine*, as well as a set of photographs of Rafanelli herself, will serve as the focus of our discussion of the multiple Orientalisms of this Muslim in Milan. I hope to show that conversion to

4 For biographical accounts, see P. C. Masini, "Introduzione," in *Una donna e Mussolini* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1975); Cecilia Cusin et al., "Anarchica e romanziera. Leda Rafanelli," *DWF* 3 (1986): 45–55; Alberto Ciampi, ed., *Leda Rafanelli – Carlo Carrà: Un romanzo. Arte e politica in un incontro ormai celebre!* (Venice: Edizioni del centro internazionale della grafica, 2005), 27–50; and Andrea Pakieser, *I Belong Only to Myself: The Life and Writings of Leda Rafanelli* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2014).

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Islam provided Rafanelli with an alternative site of enunciation and belief (to borrow Ben Grant's fortunate formulation in reference to Richard F. Burton) from which to critique both Western colonialism and modern femininity. To be sure, this alternative site, as Rafanelli constructs it, is not without its contradictions and problematic participation in some of the very stereotypes it aims to critique. If I emphasize the positive aspects of Rafanelli's Islamophilia, it is in large part in response to the historical moment in which I write, when Islamophobia pervades much of US and European political discourse. This chapter aims, then, to combine what Eve Sedgwick called paranoid and reparative critical practices.[5] That is to say, I aim, on the one hand, and as a paranoid reader, to continue to remain alert to ideological mystifications, as would any hermeneut of suspicion, and yet, on the other, I strive to be open to the contingent relations and possibilities that arise in Rafanelli's highly idiosyncratic melding of positions and identities.

The Sartorial Psyche

What interests me in both Rafanelli's autobiographical fictions and photographs are the functions of cross-cultural dressing and Orientalizing interior decoration, and the relations between interiority and exteriority that are intimated by them. These aspects of Rafanelli's production, both of her own image and of her writings, are inevitably noted, but also equally inevitably trivialized, as "araberie" (a coinage that recalls the term "chinoiserie" and its connotations of superficiality).[6] I want to mobilize two perspectives on them: the Orientalism of what I will call "the polygamous plot," focalized through the character of Lorenzo in *Incantamento*, and the Orientalism of what I will

5 I refer to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's essay "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You" (67–92) in her *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

6 Mattia Granata, *Lettere d'amore e d'amicizia. La corrispondenza di Leda Rafanelli Carlo Molaschi e Maria Rossi per una lettura dell'anarchismo milanese* (1913–1919) (Pisa: BFS Edizioni, 2002), 26. Of her experience in Egypt, Granata writes: "Da quel momento inizia il suo stravagante modo di abbigliarsi all'araba, di cibarsi secondo le usanze arabe e regole coraniche, di circondarsi di tutte le possibili araberie." [From that moment, she began her extravagant way of dressing as an Arab, of eating according to Arabic customs and Qur'anic rules, and of surrounding herself with all possible "Araberies"].

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call (modifying a coinage by Joan Copjec) the "sartorial psyche," focalized through the character Gamila in the same novel and enacted through Rafanelli's posing before the camera.[7] In this latter Orientalism, dress is not merely adornment or interior decoration but, following Saba Mahmood's work on the "politics of piety," is inseparable from a mode of subjectivation in which a psychic interiority is sustained through an external practice.[8]

Rafanelli can be forgiven the opportunism of exploiting readers' curiosity about the recently assassinated Mussolini in the 1946 memoir *Una donna e Mussolini*. After all, she had spent the *ventennio* living in poverty and telling fortunes on street corners largely as a result of the destruction by fascist squads of the printing presses of the publishing house, Libreria editrice sociale, that she and her companion, Giuseppe Monanni, had founded and run relatively successfully until 1923. It is to the 1946 work that I owe my first awareness of the earlier *Incantamento*. No doubt capitalizing on the titillation factor, and perhaps hoping to arouse interest in her earlier works, Rafanelli recounts a conversation between Mussolini and herself in which Benito muses: "Scrivere

7 I draw inspiration here from Joan Copjec's "Sartorial Superego," *October* 50 (1989), 56–95. Pursuing a psychoanalytic critique of utilitarianism, Copjec takes up the case of the French psychiatrist G. G. de Clérambault, who, during a stay in Morocco between 1914 and 1918, learned Arabic, began a study of Arab dress, and took 40,000 photos of variously veiled and draped figures, both men and women. The "sartorial superego" would originate in what has been called "the great masculine renunciation" in the history of dress: the moment in the middle of the nineteenth century when "man surrendered the field of fashion to women and came to occupy, instead, that of function" (71). Copjec tracks the way in which a notion of "use" acquires an ethical sense through an analysis of functionalism in architecture, utilitarianism in philosophy, and in Clérambault's writings and photographs, with a keen eye for the implications for French colonialism. Crucial for Copjec's argument is that the "colonial cloth" in question is the veil: as she writes, "Isn't this fantasmatic figure of the veiled colonial subject a kind of objectified, sartorial form of the Freudian superego?" (87). It is here that Rafanelli's case parts ways most significantly from that of Clérambault, since the veil does not figure prominently in her fantasy; hence the necessity to theorize a different psychic role for Rafanelli's sartorial practice.

8 See Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005). In her study of the women's mosque movement in contemporary Egypt Mahmood argues convincingly that inner qualities can be understood to be produced through external, bodily practices – in the case she examines, "outward markers of religiosity – ritual practices, styles of comporting oneself, dress, and so on" (31). Mahmood works backward through Foucault's "modes of subjectivation" to the Aristotelian notion of *habitus*, and then forward to the way in which exteriority is conceived as a means to interiority in the mosque movement.

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un romanzo con due personaggi come noi, portandoli in un mondo irreale, in un ambiente diverso, ove nessuno ci riconosca, ed esaltando le nostre vicende fino a farle diventare simboliche" [To write a novel with two characters like us, transporting them to an unreal world, in a different setting, where no one would recognize us, and elevating our doings so as to make them symbolic].[9] To which Rafanelli responds: "E' una buona idea, ma credo che il romanzo lo scriverò io" [It's a good idea, but I think it will be I who will write the novel]. To make sure the reader can follow the trail of pebbles, she adds a footnote: "Infatti lo scrissi io, nel 1919–20, e fu pubblicato per i tipi di *Modernissima*, Milano. Lo intitolai *Incantamento* sotto lo pseudonimo *Sahra*" (*Una donna e Mussolini*, 179) [In fact, I wrote it in 1919–20, and it was published by *Modernissima* in Milan. I entitled it *Enchantment*, with the pseudonym *Sahra*]. The reader who expects to learn juicy tidbits about the Duce's love life will, however, be disappointed; both texts are far more interested in displaying Rafanelli's Orientalist credentials, and in distinguishing her political views from those of the then-director of *Avanti*.

The plot of *Incantamento* is simple. Lorenzo Ardèvi (apparently the pseudonym that Mussolini used when registering at hotels for his assignations) is portrayed as an intensely ambitious young journalist, with "occhi grandi, neri, dallo sguardo un po' folle" [large, black eyes with a slightly crazy look].[10] Rafanelli writes in 1917–1918 of Lorenzo/Benito:

> Nato in provincia da una di quelle povere famiglie oneste, dette a ragione buone, egli portava in sé una smania segreta di emergere, di vivere, di trionfare, di godere. Aveva bisogno di dominare, di tenere qualche *destino* nel suo pugno. (*Incantamento*, 9)
>
> [Born in the provinces to one of those poor but honest families, rightly called "good," he bore within him a secret craving to distinguish himself, to live, to triumph, to enjoy. He needed to dominate, to hold some *destiny* in his fist.]

Mussolini himself would probably have approved of such a characterization of his still-Socialist self; less flattering is the destiny of the fictional

9 Leda Rafanelli, *Una donna e Mussolini* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1946), 178. All translations are my own.

10 Leda Rafanelli (Sahra), *Incantamento. Romanzo* (Milan: Casa Editrice "Modernissima," 1921), 7.

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character named Lorenzo. It is his desire to dominate that will be thwarted in the novel's account of their dalliance. Lorenzo is asked by his boss to pay a visit to a bewitching woman whose victim, in this instance, is the sister of the editor of the newspaper. The sister, one contessa Sabini, claims to have been defrauded of jewels and personal letters by an enchantress, an Egyptian who goes by the name "Gamila," and who makes a living by selling unnamed oriental objects to other women and by reading their palms. Lorenzo's mission is to reclaim both jewels and letters without falling victim to the seductress, who is suspected of the worst that a popularized and highly clichéd Orientalism has to offer:

> Forse offre loro la conoscenza di complicati piaceri; forse presso di lei le signore "oneste" fumano l'oppio, si iniettano la morfina, respirano l'ètere, venerano Lesbo, chissà. Figuratevi che la contessa crede che quella donna diabolica sia l'amante di un suo figlio. (*Incantamento*, 28)
>
> [Perhaps she offers knowledge of complicated pleasures; maybe "honest" ladies smoke opium, shoot up morphine, breath ether, venerate Lesbos, who knows? Just imagine that the countess thinks that diabolical woman is the lover of her son.]

Incest, lesbianism, morphine, and opium: all transgressions that the nineteenth-century popular novel had already exploited, here augmented if not surpassed by an additional transgression: Rafanelli's conversion to Islam, novelized in the already Muslim figure of Gamila ("beautiful" in Arabic). In this *roman à clef*, Rafanelli adopts the persona of an Arabic-speaking Muslim Egyptian woman divorced from a pasha who fathered her son, Ramzi, who plays the role of her servant. Predictably enough, Lorenzo will not be immune to her enchantments, and soon becomes distracted and cool toward his young and pregnant wife, Elsa. Not normally a woman who seeks the company of others, Elsa is driven by her despair to consult a woman of society, Cleofe, to discover whether her husband is in fact in love with another. Taking pity on the young wife, Cleofe advises her to seek the help of an Egyptian woman who goes by the name of none other than Gamila. Bearing a photograph of her husband, Elsa visits Gamila, who now discovers that Lorenzo has a wife to deceive, and a decision is taken: Gamila gives Elsa a phony potion and a ritual to perform, while she herself decides to end the "incantamento" by appearing to Lorenzo without her Oriental dress. It works, and Lorenzo returns to the young wife, while Gamila returns to Egypt with her son and lover, Ramzi, in tow.

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Authorized and interpellated by *Una donna e Mussolini*'s directive to read *Incantamento* as the novelization of the encounter between Rafanelli and Mussolini, one might say that the earlier text, written before Mussolini had come to power, is under fewer political and ideological constraints than the later text, written soon after both the *ventennio nero* and the Duce's death, and hence in a tumultuous moment when political redefinitions and rewritings were everywhere underway. My point is that a greater space is opened up for fantasy in the earlier text; a brief comparison of what seems to be the same episode, recounted in both texts, may strengthen that suggestion. The episode is pivotal in both narrations, turning as it does on a kiss and its consequences. In the 1946 account Mussolini forces himself on Rafanelli, who has maintained throughout that their relation is one of friendship. It is June 1913, and Mussolini has just switched to the informal "tu" with Rafanelli: "Mentre eravamo presso la porta della stanza di lui, con un gesto improvviso, inatteso, che non potei evitare, mi strinse a sé e mi baciò. Sentii che il suo volto ardeva come per febbre. Non ebbi tempo di ritirarmi; ma non resi il bacio" (*Una donna*, 109) [While we were by the door of his room, with a sudden and unexpected gesture that I could not avoid, he pulled me to him and kissed me. I felt his face burn as though with fever. I didn't have time to withdraw, but I didn't return the kiss]. After this point in *Una donna* Rafanelli's concern is to correct the mistaken impression that she desired Benito, and to distance herself clearly from his political waffling and eventual betrayal of his socialist beginnings. She even casts herself as having foreseen the war in Ethiopia, in effect cursing him in advance: "Guai a chi oserà colpire la terra d'Etiopia cercando di ridurla in schiavitù" (*Una donna*, 217) [Woe to him who will dare to strike Ethiopia, and attempt to enslave it]. The fictionalization of the kiss in *Incantamento* tells a different story. Like Benito, Lorenzo forces himself on Gamila:

> con un ànsito di collera e trionfo insieme abattè la donna sui cuscini, e stringendo tra le mani la sua piccola testa, fuse le labbra con le altre labbra in un bacio ardente, lungo, voluttuouso che fu reso. Fu un bacio solo, ma carico di voluttà; uno di quei baci che fanno scorrere il sangue come lava nelle vene. (*Incantamento*, 266)

> [with an eagerness at once angry and triumphant, he threw the woman onto the pillows and gripping her small head, fused his lips to hers in an ardent kiss, long, voluptuous, and reciprocated. It was only one kiss, but full of voluptuousness; one of those kisses that make the blood flow like lava in the veins.]

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If the description of the kiss in *Una donna* characterizes it as sexual assault, the description in *Incantamento* sounds more like what one might find in a *romanzo rosa*, or in the popular fictions of the likes of Carolina Invernizio. My concern is not with the veracity of the account but with the difference in discursive conditions. Just as the kiss can be reciprocated in the 1921 text, so is greater space given to the cross-cultural masquerade that is my focus here.

If Giovanni Finati passed as Albanian in the deserts of Egypt and the towns and villages of England, Rafanelli's fantasy is to pass as Egyptian and Muslim in the pages of her fictions, and to pose in her own residence and in the photographic studios of Milan. In *Una donna e Mussolini* Rafanelli's own lodgings are described: "La mia stanza era ammobiliata all'orientale, con divani bassi e stuoie e cuscine sul pavimento per sedersi a terra (*Una donna*, 20) [My rooms was furnished in the Oriental style, with low sofas and mats and cushions providing seating on the floor], and in it she carries out Muslim practices and rituals, as does Gamila in *Incantamento* and as did Rafanelli in her home in viale Monza in Milan.[11] In *Incantamento*, richly colored carpets line the stairway to Gamila's apartment, and the odor of incense and sandalwood lead Lorenzo to an enormous octagonal room "rivestita di tappeti orientali e di stoie … profumata e spoglia di mobili" (*Incantamento*, 37) [covered with Oriental rugs and mats … perfumed and bare of furniture], where he sees Gamila for the first time, lounging on cushions.

> Gli parve subito bella, di una bellezza fantastica … Candida la pelle, forse in virtù di qualche cosmetico da lei stessa ritrovato; e neri come la notte i capelli tagliati tondi intorno alla piccola testa e diritti sulla fronte come le antiche regine egiziane, vive ancora nei geroglifici … Il resto della persona sparve in una strana acconciatura di veli neri ricamati d'oro; tenuti insieme al collo da una gorgiera rotonda e da una cintura di lavoro egiziano, ornate di quei famosi scarabei azzurro verdi, lavorati nella pietra intangibile nei tempi lontani dei regni faraonici. (*Incantamento*, 39)

11 A black and white photo of Rafanelli's residence in Viale Monza, 77 ca. 1925–1933, contained in Chessa, *Leda Rafanelli*, shows cushions covering the floor, carpets hung on the walls beneath a star of David, wall hangings bearing Arabic script, and a flag bearing the star and crescent, symbol of Islam. A painting by Rafanelli contained in the same volume, and labeled a representation of her house in Viale Monza, also includes a triple star and crescent, emblem of the Egyptian flag between 1881 and 1922.

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> [She seemed beautiful to him at once, with a fantastic beauty … . Her skin white, perhaps by virtue of some cosmetic she herself had discovered; her hair black as night, and cut in a bowl-shape around her tiny head, and straight on her forehead like that of ancient Egyptian queens, still alive in hieroglyphs … . The rest of her body vanished into a strange get-up of black veils embroidered in gold, held together at the neck by a round choker and by a belt of Egyptian workmanship, adorned with those famous blue-green scarabs, worked in the intangible stone of the faraway times of Pharaonic reigns.]

This is in itself a fine example of Egyptomania, the craze for all things Egyptian (ranging from the Egyptian Revival in architecture to refiguring of race in the American South) that saw its most spectacular outburst in the wake of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, in full force.[12] Rafanelli makes explicit the racial underpinnings of her version of Egyptomania; Gamila does not come by her fair skin naturally, but by virtue of cosmetics known to her alone. If the standard of beauty evoked through Lorenzo's perspective is a Western and white one, the means of achieving it are figured as an Oriental art practiced upon an epidermis that Rafanelli repeatedly characterizes throughout her writings as "olivastra" [olive-ish] and "beduina" [Bedouin], a feature that plays an important part in her ethnomasquerade. The descriptions of clothing and ornaments linger and elaborate, as do no others in the text; as the passage continues, Rafanelli takes care to distance Gamila's sartorial Orientalism from that of the literature and popular culture of the fin-de-siècle:

> Quella figura di donna … non aveva nulla di teatrale. Lorenzo aveva veduto tante e tante attrici, anche celebri, in costumi orientali antichi e moderni, e ricordava le goffe stonature della inesperienza dei figurinisti; la voluta ricerca dell'effetto con i soliti ornamenti e gioielli dissimili per stile e per epoca; – le Cleopatre vestite come per rappresentare *Salomé*; le *Salammbò* avvolte nei veli da *bajadiera* indiana. (*Incantamento*, 39)

12 For a transhistorical overview, see James Stevens Curl, *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West* (New York: Routledge, 2005). For a compelling account of constructions of race in relation to Egyptomania in the nineteenth-century US, see Scott Trafton, *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

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> [There was nothing theatrical … about that figure of a woman. Lorenzo had seen oodles of actresses, even famous ones, in both ancient and modern Oriental costumes, and he remembered the clumsy, jarring notes in the work of inexperienced fashion designers; the forced effect of the same old ornaments and jewelry that clashed in style and in period – the Cleopatras dressed to play Salomé, the Salammbôs wrapped in the veils of an Indian bayadere.]

The gesture of debunking previous Orientalizing modes is, as Lisa Lowe and others have argued, a gesture that is internal to Orientalism itself, and typical of what Ali Behdad calls "belated travelers": those who arrive in the Orient after tourism and colonialism, not to mention literature, have made the exotic into the familiar.[13] By the early twentieth century those modes are no longer found simply in the accounts of previous travels but had now attained their own cultural respectability: Flaubert's 1862 novel *Salammbô* and the operas it inspired; the 1877 Russian ballet *La Bayadere*; Oscar Wilde's 1891 *Salomé*; and Richard Strauss's opera of 1905 (and *fin-de-siècle* "Salomania") together had all contributed to forming just such a commodifiable mishmash of supposedly Oriental femininity.[14] Rafanelli thus predictably seeks to place herself at a distance from these modes, discarding them as less authentic in order to authorize her own.

On the one hand, what is sought here is at once a claim for authenticity and a platform from which to produce critiques of Western modernity (a critique even more strongly on display in both *L'oasi* and *Una donna e Mussolini*, where colonialism is the object of direct and unequivocal attack). Early in the novel, Gamila takes up the topos of the harem – still an obligatory move in women's accounts of Ottoman culture in the early twentieth century – not to debunk it as a place of squalor rather than luxury, as her compatriot Cristina di Belgiojoso had done in the mid-nineteenth century, but rather to redefine it and then launch a defense of it that is at once a critique of Western marriage and family, and a barb aimed at Lorenzo. In a conversation among women and with Lorenzo the only male present, Gamila offers a redefinition that is not the result of first-hand experience (as were those of Belgiojoso and

13 See Lowe, *Critical Terrains* and Behdad, *Belated Travelers*.

14 On "Salomania" at the *fin de siècle*, see Charles Bernheimer, *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the Fin de Siècle in Europe*, ed. T. Jefferson Kline and Naomi Schor (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 104–38.

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Amalia Nizzoli before her, and, before them, of course, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu), but must rather be the result of Rafanelli's study of Ottoman and Islamicate cultures:

> L'harem, da voi erroneamente immaginato come la sala di aspetto di un lupanare europeo, dove sono in mostra le donne vendibili, e dove l'uomo – estraneo e sconosciuto – getta una moneta invece del fazzoletto per scegliere quella che più desidera … . Deplorevole errore, o signora. L'*harem* è solo e semplicemente la stanza o l'appartamento dove le donne, padrone e ancelle, vecchie, parenti, giovinette o bambine, stanno raccolte dedicandosi alla casa, al lavoro, all'allevamento dei figli, al servizio del loro signore. (*Incantamento*, 125)

> [The harem, which you mistakenly imagine as the waiting room of a European brothel, where women for sale are on display, and where men – anonymous and foreign – toss a coin rather than a handkerchief to choose the one he desires most … A deplorable error, madam. The *harem* is simply the room or apartment where women – ladies and servants, old and young, relatives or children – are gathered together to dedicate themselves to the household, to work, to the raising of children, to the service of their man … .]

It is worth noting that Gamila is correct in her definition of the harem as simply the private quarters of a domestic residence in which the female members of the household reside, as she is correct in insisting that it was not, in Ottoman culture, a space exclusively defined by gender and sexuality.[15] Gamila goes on to defend Muslim family structure as the "più felice, più onesta, più leale, più pura della vera famiglia'(126) [the happiest, the most honest, the most faithful, the purest form of true family]. The argument takes up one of the principal stereotypes about the harem, the topos of jealousy among its occupants, in order to stand it on its head. The Western women present in Gamila's Oriental salon imagine the harem as a place where rivalry among women runs amok; Gamila argues instead that it is monogamy and its attendant deceptions that spawn scenarios of jealousy and revenge, and calls on the authority of experts and, rather unexpectedly, of feminists. Of polygamy, she says:

15 See Pierce, *The Imperial Harem*, 3–5.

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> Ne ho parlato con uomini dotti, esperti, intelligenti; ed anche con alcune di quelle donne, dalla mentalità virile, fautrici dei *diritti della donna* che sono chiamate, non so giudicare se giustamente o no, *femministe*. Ebbene, dopo lunghe discussioni, dopo aver esaminato ogni lato della questione, molti hanno dovuto riconoscere che la famiglia mussulmana, poligama o no, era ed è basata sulle più rigide leggi morali ed è ambiente di benessere, di dignità, di felicità per la donna. (*Incantamento*, 126–27)
>
> [I have discussed it with educated, expert, intelligent men, and also with several of those women of a virile mentality, those proponents of *the rights of women* who are called – I cannot judge whether rightly or not – *feminists*. And so, after long discussions examining every aspect of the question, many have had to recognize that the Muslim family, polygamous or not, was and is based on the most rigid moral laws and is an atmosphere of well-being, dignity, and happiness for women.]

In what, for Rafanelli, is an unusual nod to egalitarian feminists, here ambivalently tarred as "virile," Gamila marries a typically anti-egalitarian stance to a critique of Western institutions. To her initially diffident female listeners, Gamila goes on to explain that deception is at the core of Western practices of monogamy. In the passage that follows, Gamila claims to speak for Muslim women:

> Noi non veniamo ingannate, come purtroppo viene sempre ingannata la donna occidentale; inganno che subito le viene teso nelle stesse parole dell'uomo che le ama; il quale, forse in buona fede, promette loro di amarle *sempre*; di amare *essa sola* mentre sa che gli sarà impossibile; mentre tiene ancora relazioni con le antiche amanti. E quante donne possono vantarsi, qua in occidente – di non essere state *tradite*? Quasi nessuna. L'uomo, specialmente quando è ricco, si permette il lusso dei sultani! Si concede delle amanti quasi pubblicamente. (*Incantamento*, 127)
>
> [We are not deceived, as unfortunately Western women always are – a deception that is immediately woven by the very words of the man who loves them, the man who, perhaps in good faith, promises to love them *always*, to love *her alone*, while all along he knows that it will be impossible for him to make good on the promise, while he maintains relations with his previous lovers. And how many women, here in the West, can boast that they have never been *betrayed*? Almost none. Man, especially when

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he is wealthy, allows himself the luxury of sultans! He grants himself lovers almost publicly.]

Gamila's diagnosis is simultaneously a critique of monogamy and a metatextual moment in a novel that is precisely about a married man embarked upon taking a lover "almost publicly" and deceiving a young wife portrayed as innocent and pregnant to boot. Deaf to the irony, Lorenzo understands the critique of monogamy to be a seduction addressed to him, the "enchantment" of the novel's title, and imagines that it will open up for him the possibility of polygamy, and a harem of his very own: "Cominciava a pensare alla bontà del regime poligamo: per la sua condizione gli poteva bene mantenere due donne!" (*Incantamento*, 167) [He began to think of the advantages of a polygamous regime; given his station, he could easily keep two women!].[16] This is what I refer to as the Orientalism of the polygamous plot, the fantasy that Gamila's dress turns her into the sexualized odalisque of the *Thousand and One Nights* (a hackneyed citation by the early twentieth century, and not by chance always associated with Lorenzo in the novel).

The Orientalism of the sartorial psyche puts an end to the plot of polygamy in *Incantamento*, and makes its fullest appearances in scenes of the undoing of enchantment in both *Incantamento* and *Una donna e Mussolini*. In these scenes Rafanelli takes up and Orientalizes the topos of the enchantress-turned-hag, the topos in which a beautiful young woman is revealed to be an ugly, often toothless, sometimes naked, old hag, a vehicle for staging the opposition between appearance and reality, rhetoric and plain speech, artifice and truth.[17] As we have seen in the previous chapter, the appearance/reality model can serve as the narrative instantiation of the belief in a stable and coherent

16 The figure of Gamila, instead, occupies an intermediary position in relation to the stark opposition she here sets up between Occidental and Oriental practices. The text provides her with a history in which she has been expelled from a harem precisely because she was jealous of the pasha's first and second wives; she has since undergone a conversion that allows her to dominate her passions, we are told. If Ardevi is the Milanese embarked on an oriental dream, Gamila was once an emotional westerner within the harem.

17 The Italian tradition is rich in examples, from Dante's siren as she was revealed to be the *femmina balba* to Ariosto's Alcina as she devolved into ugliness. On the topos of the enchantress-turned-hag, see Barbara Spackman, "Inter ursam et musam moritur: Folengo and the Gaping Other Mouth," in *Refiguring Woman: Gender Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Juliana Schiesari and Marilyn Migiel (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 19–34.

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self that, in Parama Roy's words, "can resist the potential pollutions of this trafficking in native identity."[18] Rafanelli's employment of it thus warrants examination. In *Incantamento* Lorenzo returns to Gamila's apartment on the appointed day, a week after the kiss that was reciprocated, hoping finally to possess and dominate her. While, at home, Elsa performs the phony rituals assigned her by the enchantress, Gamila performs the true undoing of the spell. Gone are the carpets of silk and gold, with their Egyptian arabesques; gone the veils and robes:

> Egli al primo sguardo non vide che una donna sconosciuta, magra, vestita di nero, che se ne stava ritta, immobile in mezzo alla stanza … Ella si era voluta mostrare a lui, – chissa poi perché – senza il più lieve arteficio di toeletta: aveva deposto ogni velleità di seduzione, respinto ogni mezzo della sua arte. Arte perfetta, arte che sapeva veramente di magia, se poteva trasformare in harem regali delle nude e fredde soffitte, e se poteva fare una Faraonide di quella misera donna, magra e nera, che ora stava dinanzi a lui. (*Incantamento*, 290)
>
> [At first glance, he saw only an unknown woman, skinny, dressed in black, standing straight and immobile in the middle of the room … . She had insisted on showing herself to him – who knows why – without the slightest artifice of toilette; she had taken off every seductive wile, every means of her art. A perfect art, that truly resembled magic, if it could transform naked and cold garrets into regal harems, if it could make a member of the Ptolemaic dynasty out of that miserable woman, skinny and black, who now stood before him.]

A Cleopatra turns out to be nothing other than a skinny black woman in a miserable garret. Yet Rafanelli's text does not give us a naked woman, but rather a differently dressed one. The text insists on the contrast in Gamila's clothing, with its ambiguous relation to race; the woman dressed in black in the beginning of the passage becomes simply, because metonymically, a black woman by its end. As the passage continues, blackness acquires yet other connotations. Lorenzo finds it almost an affront to his masculinity that she should appear before him modestly dressed in black "in un modesto abito; una cappa da viaggio, di *alpagas* nero, che dava alla sua persona magra

18 See the essay "Oriental Exhibits: Englishmen and Natives in Burton's *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al'Madinah & Meccah*" (28), in Roy, *Indian Traffic*.

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e diritta, l'apparenza di un prete cattolico" (*Incantamento*, 290) [in a modest outfit; a traveling cloak of black alpaca, that gave her person, thin and straight, the appearance of a Catholic priest]. Were this a "straight" version of the enchantress-turned hag, we might assume that the Italian Catholic beneath the Egyptian Muslim is finally revealed. But even in the moment that the "truth" about Gamila is unveiled, the text remains interested in fabric – the specification that her cape is made of alpaca – and the truth is itself another appearance, rather than an essence: she *appears* to be a Catholic priest. What is more, in another twist on the topos, it is emphasized that Lorenzo has not taken Gamila by surprise in this sorry state, but rather she has willed it herself: "ella non era stata sorpresa così decaduta, così misera, *ma aveva voluto essere veduta così* (*Incantamento*, 291) [she was not taken by surprise, so decayed, so miserable, *she had wanted to be seen thus*]. This is, then, not in fact an enchantress revealed to be a hag, but an enchantress revealed to be an enchantress, who produces yet another appearance, and thereby puts an end to Lorenzo's Orientalist plot of polygamy. Focalized through Lorenzo, the text tells us that "tutto era stato la visione fantastica – reale solo all'apparenza – di una delle fiabe meravigliose lette da fanciullo; lo svolgersi complicato delle reminiscenze della lontana lettura delle *Mille e una notte*; con le strane vicende di odalische e di sultani" (*Incantamento*, 296) [it had all been a fantastic vision – real only in appearance – of one of those marvelous fairytales read as a child; the complicated unfolding of memories of a long ago reading of the *Thousand and One Nights*, with its strange tales of odalisques and sultans]. The masquerade is no longer addressed to him, and he is left only with the textual mediation of the *Thousand and One Nights*. But the end of the plot of polygamy is not the end of the novel. One more chapter remains, and in it the narrative masquerade is now addressed to the son Ramzi and sustained through what is openly declared to be her incestuous relation to him; that relation allows her to take up the position of "la Faraonide incestuosa per tradizione e per casta" [the Pharaonic woman, incestuous by tradition and by cast]: that is, to sustain the fantasy by imagining her ancestry in the incestuous Ptolemaic dynasty of which Cleopatra was a member. Once aboard the ship bound for Egypt, her slender hands, "dalle unghie rosse di *henna*" (*Incantamento*, 308) [with their nails reddened with henna] appear from under her European cape in a final bit of sartorial cross-dressing. The "reality" is thus not an essence beneath the appearance, but a succession of appearances produced by the enchantress's art. Rafanelli's multiplication of appearances embraces the "pollutions … of trafficking in native identity" by exploiting the metonymical slide from black clothing to black skin.

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In *Una donna e Mussolini* Rafanelli also manipulates the topos of the enchantress-turned- hag soon after that kiss that was *not* reciprocated. When Mussolini writes to her of "il nostro amore" [our love], Rafanelli becomes alarmed, and fears her life will be ruined. Somehow the idea that theirs is a love affair must be dislodged, but how to accomplish it? Rafanelli the writer doesn't respond by letter; Rafanelli the cultural cross-dresser changes clothes:

> Vestendomi dopo il breve riposo del pomeriggio, scelsi una veste che mai avevo indossato con lui. Giorni addietro, nel calore della bella estate (finiva il mese di giugno) avevo indossato una leggera *gelabiat* bianca, stretta alla vita da una fascia "baiadera," e quando mi era stato vicino avevo sentito, attraverso la veste, lo sfiorare delle sue dita, il calore del suo contatto e – istintivamente – sentivo she bisognava evitare quelle vibrazioni fisiche che, quel giorno, non dovevano essere fra noi. Dovevo chiudermi, isolarmi, essergli lontana, non con l'anima, ma con la carne.
>
> Indossai una vecchia veste egizia, di seta nera, coperta di velo ricamato di argento (le famose *tarche* di Asiut) e serrata sul petto da un largo collare di pietre brillanti, pesanti e pungenti. Una cintura ornata di scarabei mi cingeva alla vita e, per la sua pesantezza metallica – corazza dei tempi faraonici, – mi faceva assomigliare ad una mummia acconciata pel sarcofago. É difficile che ad un uomo venga il desiderio di abbracciare una mummia. Quell'abito di tempi remoti, quasi funebre, sembrava fatto apposta per tenere a distanza qualsiasi audacia, per frenare ogni desiderio, per impedire ogni carezza. (*Una donna*, 113–14)

> [Getting dressed after a brief afternoon nap, I chose an outfit that I had never worn with him. Days before, in the summer heat (the month of June was drawing to a close), I had put on a light, white djellaba, tightened at the waist by a "Bayadere" sash, and when he was close to me I felt, through the dress, the touch of his fingers, the warmth of his contact, and I felt, instinctively, that it was necessary to avoid those physical vibrations which, that day, shouldn't have taken place between us. I needed to close myself, isolate myself, distance myself from him, not in my soul but in my flesh.
>
> I put on an old Egyptian dress of black silk, covered with a veil embroidered in silver (the famous *tarche* of Asiut), and fastened to my breast with a wide collar of heavy and pointed gems. A belt adorned with scarabs clasped my waist, and its metallic heft – a cuirass of Pharaonic times – made me resemble a mummy prepared for the sarcophagus. It is

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rare for a man to desire to embrace a mummy. That almost funereal dress from the remote past seemed made to order to keep at bay any audacity, to dampen any desire, to prevent any caress.]

As in *Incantamento*, the strategy is one not of unveiling but of substituting one appearance for another, one version of Orientalized femininity for another; in the passage above, Rafanelli takes off the fashionable bayadere sash and replaces it with the fabric known as tulle-bi-telli. In both texts Rafanelli stages the topos, but only to refuse its ideological implications, and holds fast instead to the fiction of an identity that cannot be unmasked or unveiled, but whose psychic reality is perpetuated by and sustained in its sartorial display.

Such a claim may be further substantiated through an examination of Rafanelli's own cultural cross-dressing, which mimics that of her fictional character Gamila. In a series of photographs taken between 1912 and 1919, mostly in the studio of the Fratelli Camuzzi in Milan, Rafanelli posed in outfits that resemble those she describes in *Incantamento*.[19] Wide collars formed by multiple necklaces are a frequent feature, a belt with a scarab clasp is visible in at least one photograph from 1916 (*Leda Rafanelli*, 253) and the black and white photographs suggest that the dress is sometimes simply black, though equally often patterned in stripes. In photographs from 1913 to 1917, when her hair is visible, Rafanelli's hairstyle recalls Gamila's bowl-shaped cut, which is echoed in the cover image of *Incantamento* (Figure 1), itself based on the statue of the 4th Dynasty Egyptian Princess Nofret (Figure 2).

When her bob is not visible it is covered not by a veil, which does not form part of Rafanelli's cultural cross-dressing, but rather by a close-fitting cap circled by a wide decorative band. Rows of bracelets, most likely necklaces wound around her wrists so as to cover her forearms, are a constant feature, beginning as early as 1912, when her dress is in a transitional phase from more recognizably early twentieth-century European garb to her Orientalizing mode (Figure 3).

From 1913 on she is photographed in loose-fitting, flowing garments, occasionally drawn in at the waist by a bayadere sash or topped by a bolero. Large hoop earrings are a consistent presence from 1905 until 1970, and

19 The photographs in question are reproduced in Chessa, *Leda Rafanelli*. With two exceptions, requests to reproduce those photographs here were, regrettably, denied. I therefore refer readers to the relevant page numbers in the aforementioned volume.

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Fig. 1 Cover of *Incantamento*, reproduced with the permission of the Archivio Famiglia Berneri – Aurelio Chessa di Reggio Emilia, "Fondo Leda Rafanelli-Marina Monanni-Maria Laura Filardi."

Rafanelli always looks directly at the camera, her eye meeting that of the observer (Figure 4).

Rafanelli anachronistically combines her ancient Pharaonic garb with her modern Islamic devotion, the latter signaled by a star and crescent pin that is a frequent feature in the photographs from this decade, variously worn on the right shoulder, at the center of a bolero-type bodice, or at the waist. In addition, banners with Arabic script provide the background for several of the photographs. In a pair of photographs from November 19, 1914 (*Leda Rafanelli*, 248), Rafanelli poses in front of the same cloth backdrop with a crescent moon sewn onto it, and Arabic script that is partly obscured by her head and hands, positioned somewhat differently in each photograph. At the top of the frame the Arabic script reads "God and Egypt, 1333," a reference to the Islamic year 1333, which began on November 19, 1914 of the Gregorian calendar.[20] Below the date the script is partially blocked, but the words "mother, father" can be made out, as well as "my eye," which, given the

20 I am grateful to Emily Drumsta for deciphering and translating the Arabic. For the date, see http://onlinedictionary.datasegment.com/word/mohammedan+calendar. Accessed September 19, 2012.

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Fig. 2 Princess Nofret. Free content.

context, is very probably a reference to Rafanelli's son, Aini, "eye" in Arabic. Two photographs from November 1917 (*Leda Rafanelli*, 256–57) also show Rafanelli posed before a backdrop quilted with both geometric designs and Arabic script.

Wearing both bayadere sash and bolero, and with the usual jewelry and crescent pin, Rafanelli stands before the backdrop in one photograph and crouches before it in the other, thereby revealing more of the script in the second of the two photographs. Here there are two different categories of script. The text in white bears the word "maktūb," "it is written," which it is customary to pronounce before citing a Qur'anic verse. And, indeed, the white text directly behind Rafanelli's head is an "aya" (verse) from the Qur'an, taken from the chapter on the Virgin Mary (19:23), and which translator Alan Jones renders: "Would that I had died before this and become someone totally forgotten."[21] These are words spoken by Mary just as she begins to feel the labor pains of Jesus' birth. The emphasis on motherhood tallies

21 *The Qur'ān*, trans. Alan Jones (Exeter: Short Run Press, 2007), 284.

Fig. 3 Leda Rafanelli, 1912. Photograph from the "Fondo Leda Rafanelli-Marina Monanni-Maria Laura Filardi." Reproduced with the permission of the Archivio Famiglia Berneri – Aurelio Chessa di Reggio Emilia.

Fig. 4 Leda Rafanelli, 1914. Photograph from the "Fondo Leda Rafanelli-Marina Monanni-Maria Laura Filardi." Reproduced with the permission of the Archivio Famiglia Berneri – Aurelio Chessa di Reggio Emilia.

with the writings we discuss in the second half of this chapter, with their gynocentric focus on cross-species and cross-race identifications between "women" and "females," at the same time as the latter quotation might suggest a nod toward a bridge between Christianity and Islam. The second category of script contains a phrase that is certainly not a quotation from an original Arabic text, judging by the poor grammar and spelling. One attempt to render intelligible the mistaken grammar and spelling suggests that it might be read thus: "Bitter as patience in the West, sweet as the chasm in the beloved, fruited East."[22] If that is a correct reconstruction of what Rafanelli meant to convey – and it is certainly in line with her work more generally – then yet again she combines her dress with an "Orienteuse's" sympathy for an imagined East.

To be sure, Rafanelli's composite dress would not allow her to pass on the streets of any particular location in her "beloved, fruited East." Her combination of features is idiosyncratic and eclectic, at once Pharaonic, Islamic, and "Gypsy."[23]

The latter identification, represented visually by the large hoop hearings seen in all the photographs, is made explicit in Rafanelli's autobiographical asides and in the posthumously published *Memorie d'una chiromante* [Memoirs of a Fortune-teller], in which she claims "Arab blood" through descent from a Tunisian Gypsy: "Ho sangue arabo nelle vene: mio nonno Materno era figlio naturale di uno Zingaro Tunisino" [I have Arab blood in my veins; my maternal grandfather was the bastard son of a Tunisian Gypsy].[24] Themselves the object of an Orientalist mentality, "Gypsies" were associated with dark skin, foreign origins, statelessness, and freedom from various constraints of Western civilization, all characteristics that Rafanelli seems to have been eager to embrace. Even more to the point, a long tradition dating back to the first appearance of "Gypsies" in Europe understood them to be Egyptians, or, more precisely, "Egipcyans" in sixteenth-century English. As historian David Mayall writes, "the label Egyptian was commonly applied

22 I am again grateful to Emily Drumsta for translations from the Arabic.

23 "Gypsy" is currently understood to be a term of opprobrium; nomenclature continues to be vexed, however. The term many scholars now prefer in English is "Romany" for the people so named, and "Romani" for the language they speak. See Deborah Epstein Nord's overview in *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807–1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 1–20, and Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 2. I have here used "Gypsy" in scare quotes to indicate cultural representations of Romany that did not originate with the Romany themselves.

24 See Leda Rafanelli (Djali), *Memorie d'una chiromante. Romanzo inedito*, ed. Milva Maria Cappellini (Cuneo: Nerosubianco, 2010).

to the group throughout Europe in the early modern period and is thought to have derived from the group itself, who exploited the mystical, magical and exotic impressions associated with Egypt to their own advantage."[25] Some mid-nineteenth-century scholars hypothesized that they were descendants of ancient Egyptians whose dispersal had been foretold by the Biblical prophets.[26] By the early twentieth century scholars had abandoned this theory of origins and replaced it with India as the source of a nomadic people who had spread to Europe in the early sixteenth century. Yet the association persisted, not least in the English term "Gypsy," an abbreviation of the original "Egipcyan." What is more, the nineteenth-century romantic image of the "Gypsy" added political connotations that would have held an appeal for Rafanelli's anti-modern stance. Whereas eighteenth-century phobic representations saw "Gypsies" as lawless, thieving vagrants unwilling to perform "honest" wage labor and who thereby threatened civilization, "romantic gypsophilia" (as Janet Lyon terms it) understood them instead as a community actively resistant to the disciplining authority of the modern state, an emblem of liberty, and an example of an alternative form of sociability.[27] This was the case both in the popular imagination and in works of the cultural elite in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Katie Trumpener, for example, offers a broad survey

25 David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities 1500–200: From Egipcyans and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 120. This sixteenth-century understanding was present linguistically in Italian; Angus Fraser notes that in 1534 Francesco Sforza "proscribed 'all *Egiptii* commonly called *Cingali*' on pain of hanging" from Milan. Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 108.

26 See, for example, Francesco Predari, *Origini e vicende dei* (sic) *zingari* (Milan: Paolo Lampato, 1841), 5; and Samuel Roberts, *The Gypsies, their Origin, Continuation, and Destination, as Clearly Foretold in the Prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1836). Predari, author of encyclopaedias and founder of the journal *Antologia italiana*, offers a representative sampling of the many other theories of origins of the Romany that had been proposed, among them that they were alternately Jews, "Saracens," natives of Mauritania, inhabitants of the Pyrenees, a Syrian religious sect, and on and on. The nineteenth-century drive to produce them as a "race" has been replaced with arguments against the notion of a homogeneous ethnic identity that suggest, for example, that Gypsies may be understood to be a transnational group of people who, in the words of Judith Okely, "chose to reject wage-labour rather than be proletarianised." See Judith Okely, *The Traveller Gypsies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 13–14.

27 See Janet Lyon, "Gadže Modernism," in *Modernism/Modernity* 11:3 (2004), 530, and Katie Trumpener, "The Time of the Gypsies: A 'People without History' in the Narratives of the West," *Critical Inquiry* 18:4 (1992), 865.

of nineteenth-century representations of the Romany that range widely from Wordsworth and Sir Walter Scott, Pushkin and Liszt, to Austen and George Eliot, and consistently imagine "Gypsies" as "beyond the reach of everything that constitutes Western identity, as Franz Lizst's influential mid-nineteenth century summary suggests: outside of historical record and historical time, outside of Western law, the Western nation state, and Western economic orders" (Trumpener, "The Time of the Gypsies," 860). Closer to Rafanelli's own moment, the critic and poet Arthur Symons (author of the influential 1899 *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*) perpetuated this image in 1908 in a short essay "In Praise of Gypsies." Although the learned Symons likely knew that scholars no longer believed the Romany to have originated in Egypt, he nonetheless begins his essay by citing just that notion: "Egyptiani, Erronum, Impostorumque genus nequissimum" [Egyptians, Wanderers, Impostors and a mischievous ilk].[28] For Symons, "Gypsies" are "the only free race," a people who have escaped the "new, worse slavery" of wage labor and industrialization: "He has no desire to work for the sake of work, an odious modern creed from which only the Gypsy is traditionally and persistently exempt" (298). "Gypsies" are, he declared, "the last romance left in the world," and "our only link with the East, with mystery, with magic" (296). In short, as an "other" internal to Europe imagined as actively resistant to disciplining by capitalism and the state, the late nineteenth-century stereotypical image of the Romany offered itself to Rafanelli as a link between ancient Egypt and contemporary Europe, and as source of a subjectivation that brought with it both a racialization as non-white and an identification with a transnational minority characterized by a mobility that she herself lacked.

We might fruitfully compare Rafanelli's posing to that of her contemporaries who, like her, were photographed in "Oriental" dress. One might think, for example, of Isabelle Eberhardt (1877–1904); like Rafanelli, she was a convert to Islam – or rather, she claimed to be a Muslim by birth – who learned Arabic, and, like Rafanelli, she was a cultural cross-dresser. But for Eberhardt, who spent her short life in North Africa dressed as an Arab man, the adoption of Oriental dress allowed her to transcend the sociocultural limits of what was permissible for women in that context more generally, and in particular to visit various *zaouïyas*, or religious schools, where she could pursue her study of Islam.[29] Critics have differed in their assessment of the degree to which

28 Arthur Symons, "In Praise of Gypsies," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* New Series 1:4 (1908), 294.

29 See Ali Behdad's discussion of Eberhardt in *Belated Travelers*, 113–32.

the disguise was transgressive. Marjorie Garber characterizes the product of her transvestism as a "gender indeterminacy" that both obeys and subverts patriarchal and paternal law (Eberhardt's father was in fact the first to dress her as a boy).[30] Ali Behdad, on the other hand, reads her transvestism as "the site of a double negation – of both her femininity and her Europeanness" that reinscribes her in Orientalist discourse as the male knower who can penetrate the field of knowledge of the Other, even as she seeks an authentic transformation in identity.[31] Or one could think of T. E. Lawrence, who, in 1914, while Rafanelli was corresponding with Mussolini in pre-war Milan, was at work in Cairo gathering intelligence for the British. T. E., or, as we more casually refer to him, Lawrence of Arabia, also adopted Arab dress throughout his years spent in North Africa. In "White Skins, Brown Masks," Kaja Silverman has written beautifully of the way in which Lawrence enacted a double mimesis, in which his imitation of the Arabs by way of dress was meant to provide a model for the colonized in turn to imitate.[32] What may have begun as an imitation for Lawrence, however, becomes an identification, and one in which "the garments he wore not only defined the body beneath them, but designated a corresponding subject position" (Silverman, "White Skins, Brown Masks," 305). These two cases seem rather different, especially when one thinks of the consequences of taking off the masquerade. One might imagine that the ease with which Eberhardt moved among Muslims and local tribes would instantly have been revoked (and hence also her ability, in the last several years of her life, to do reconnaissance work for the French colonial authorities), even as Eberhardt's biographer, Annette Kobak, claims that her disguise fooled only casual acquaintances, and that those in the know went along with the masquerade out of a sense of "discretion."[33] At the same time,

30 See the chapter "The Chic of Araby: Transvestism and the Erotics of Cultural Appropriation," in Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 324–29.

31 Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, 124.

32 See the chapter "White Skin, Brown Mask: The Double Mimesis, or with Lawrence in Arabia," in Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992). See also Marjorie Garber's discussion in *Vested Interests*, 304–09. Silverman points out that Lawrence's gold and white robes were in fact wedding garments.

33 See Annette Kobak, *Isabelle: The Life of Isabelle Eberhardt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). Kobak cites from Eberhardt's friend and fellow writer Robert Randau, in describing the relation of local *fellah* to Isabelle: "All of them knew that this svelte cavalier in her immaculate white burnous and soft red leather boots was a woman. The innate courtesy of the Arabs is such that in her presence none of them ever made any

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it seems clear that Eberhardt's subjectivity was at least partially enmeshed in her mode of dress. Lawrence's case adds further complexity, especially if we take Silverman's analysis into account, for his erotic investments were inseparable from the masquerade; it is worth noting the basic fact, however, that the "brown mask" could always be removed to reveal the "white skin" of her title, and thereby reinstate the colonial relations of power that would put Lawrence back on top, as it were. Another example close to the case of Rafanelli would be that of Grace Ellison, a British woman who traveled to Turkey in the early part of the twentieth century and authored the 1915 *An English Woman in a Turkish Harem*, which includes photographs of herself in what she refers to as "Turkish costume." Reina Lewis's study of Ellison suggests yet other possible readings that might be counterposed to Rafanelli's cross-cultural dressing. On the one hand, Lewis sees in Ellison a longing for "opportunities to imagine alternative femininities," and, on the other, she usefully contextualizes the practice of, as she puts it, "performing the Orient in Europe."[34] Lewis reminds us that "the fascination with the Orient and the body Orientalized through clothes and movement was becoming recognizable as one of the contours of women's cultural consumption." The costume parties thrown in Paris by French fashion designer Paul Poiret would be a case in point. The most famous, held in June 1911, was titled "The Thousand and Second Night"; as fashion historian Nancy J. Troy has documented, Poiret required that all 300 guests wear Oriental costumes to be permitted entry; if they did not do so, they were given the option of putting on the clothes that Poiret himself had designed, "including the so-called *jupe*-culotte and harem trousers which dominated his spring 1911 collection of women's clothes."[35] (Troy suggests that these had, in turn, been inspired by Léon Bakst's designs for the Ballet Russes production of *Schéhérazade* the previous year). Events such as these, Lewis tells us, lay " the ground for the outrageous success of Valentino's cross-culturally dressed role in the *Sheik*

allusion, even so much as a wink, to a quality that she did not want to acknowledge" (197). If the assessment of "innate" courtesy were all we had to go on, one might be more than a little suspicious of this account.

34 Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism*, 216.

35 Nancy J. Troy, *Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 102. I am grateful to Patrizia Calefato for referring me to Poiret and his parties. See also Onur Inal, "Women's Fashions in Transition: Ottoman Borderlands and the Anglo-Ottoman Exchange of Costumes," *Journal of World History* 22:2 (2011): 243–72, for an historical overview of British women's adoption of Ottoman dress.

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Fig. 5 Rudolf Valentino and Agnes Ayres in *The Sheik* (1921). Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive.

in 1921, which prompted its own consumer craze for Sheik style dress and interiors" (Figure 5).[36]

Both of these aspects seem to be in play in Rafanelli/Gamila's performance of the Orient. On the one hand, it is worth emphasizing that Gamila is said to be a merchant, a *mercantessa*, who traffics in unnamed objects and stuffs, which seem to be perfumes as well as haschisch. Gamila is herself a commodifier of the Orient, just as women's Orientalist discourse itself is fully commodified by the early twentieth century.[37] One might say that Rafanelli's

36 On the fascinating and complicated case of Valentino, see Giorgio Bertellini's work on the notion of "Atlantic Italianness" as embodied in the career of this southern Italian immigrant to the US. Giorgio Bertellini, "The Atlantic Valentino: The 'Inimitable Lover' as Racialized and Gendered Italian," in *Intimacy and Italian Migration: Gender and Domestic Lives in a Mobile World*, ed. Donna Gabaccia and Loretta Baldassar (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), and "*Duce/Divo*: Masculinity, Racial Identity, and Politics Among Italian-Americans in 1920s New York City," *Journal of Urban History* 31:5 (2005), 685–726.

37 It is worth noting that the commodification of harem literature made it possible

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novelization of her cultural cross-dressing is also a form of consumption, a fantasy of consumer, rather than sexual, excess.[38] Yet, on the other hand, same-sex cultural cross-dressing in a context in which no access to forbidden spaces or information is sought on behalf of a colonial power, nor exemption from gender constraints to be gained, suggests a revision of psychic rather than social terms. It is significant in this respect that Rafanelli's dress departs from one tradition of cross-cultural cross-dressing that privileged the *şalvar*, divided skirt or "harem pants" identified with Ottoman dress and adopted by a range of figures, from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the eighteenth century to women's rights advocate Amelia Bloomer (after whom "bloomers" were named) in the nineteenth, to female modernists and their creations in the twentieth. As Dianne Sachko MacLeod and others have argued, the bifurcated garment signified "male freedom of movement, independence and lack of restraint" and made it possible for women to "stretch the boundaries of their gender."[39] Virginia Woolf's Orlando, protagonist of the eponymous 1928 novel, might stand as the culminating figure in this lineage; as Susan Gubar notes "in donning the signature costume of the Ottoman empire, Orlando joins the larger rank and file of British women who, since the eighteenth century, had appropriated it to signify emancipation from civic codes, social bondage and gender constraints."[40] Rafanelli, on the other, seems more interested in strengthening the boundaries of her gender, fortifying them through her ancient Egyptian pose, while aligning herself with a resistant

for Ottoman women, writing in English, to emerge as authors in their own right. Reina Lewis has analyzed the cases of Zeyneb Hanım and Melek Hanım (pseudonyms of Hadidjé Edib and Nouryé Neyr-el-Nissa), whose letters inspired Pierre Loti's novel *Les Désenchantées* and who subsequently published their own books with the assistance of Grace Ellison. See Lewis, "'Oriental' Femininity as Cultural Commodity: Authorship, Authority, and Authenticity," in *Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture*, ed. Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones and Mary Roberts (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 95–120.

38 See Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism*, 220. Examples of the kinds of images that might have reached Rafanelli can be found in Malek Alloula's study of picture postcards of Algerian women sent by French colonialists during the first decades of the twentieth century (Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986]), as well in Sarah-Graham-Brown's *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East 1860–1950* (London: Quartet, 1988).

39 See Dianne Sachko MacLeod, "Cross-cultural Cross-dressing: Class, Gender, and Modernist Sexual Identity," in *Orientalism Transposed: The Impact of the Colonies on British Culture*, ed. Julie F. Codell and Dianne Sachko MacLeod (Brookfield, UT: Ashgate, 1998), 64.

40 Susan Gubar, "Blessings in Disguise," *Massachusetts Review* 22 (1981): 477.

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form of sociability via her "Gypsy" identification. What is more, if it is indeed the case that the thrill of the masquerade for the likes of Richard F. Burton or T. E. Lawrence lay at least in part in the assurance that one could always revert to the "white skin" beneath the disguise, then Rafanelli's epidermal masquerade would distance her from their mode of posing.[41] If dress for the former served to consolidate the very boundaries it appeared to cross, insofar as it was layered onto a firm sense of racial differentiation, Rafanelli aims to exclude such a sense of differentiation through her insistence on her own dark skin. In fact, we have arrived at the moment when we might think of her "sartorial psyche" not so much as a masquerade, which implies a dislocation between a subjectivity and a role assumed (or again, as we have said, a clear-cut distinction between interiority and exteriority), but as a mode of subjectivation in which the practice of dress was a necessary "means for realizing the form of religiosity" and the alternative femininity she cultivated.[42] In that case, we would situate Rafanelli less as Orientalist and more as *Orienteuse*, to borrow and feminize a term that Edward Said used to refer to the sympathetic stance of the Orientalist scholar Raymond Schwab.[43] As *Orienteuse*, Rafanelli's dress is a form of self-fashioning that was a constant reminder of a life-long allegiance at once cultural, religious, and political.

To be sure, Rafanelli's religion was a matter of perplexity among her fellow anarchists. As Mattia Granata writes of her experience in Egypt and conversion to Islam, "fu questo avvenimento a segnarla così profondamente da attribuirle le caratteristiche che sempre la connotarono, tanto esteriormente, quanto interiormente. La sua religiosità, così eccezionale soprattutto in un ambiente anarchico, divenne il suo tratto peculiare" [this event marked her so

41 This is the claim of Gail Ching-Liang Low, in "White Skins/Black Masks: The Pleasures and Politics of Imperialism," *New Formations* 5 (1988): 83–201. For Low, the pleasure of cross-cultural dressing lies in the superficial quality of dress, which can always be taken off to "revert to the white identity under the native clothes" (93). See also Reina Lewis's discussion in "On Veiling, Vision and Voyage: Cross-Cultural Dressing and Narratives of Identity," in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (New York: Routledge, 2003), 520–41.

42 See Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 31.

43 Said writes:"So profound and beneficent is Schwab's view of the Orient that one is doubtless more accurate in describing him as an o*rienteur* than as an *orientaliste*, a man more interested in a generous awareness than in detached classification." See Edward Said, "Foreword," in *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, Raymond Schwab, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), ix.

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deeply as to endow her with traits that henceforth always characterized her, as much externally as internally. Her religiosity, so exceptional above all in an anarchist setting, became her special trait].[44] To better explore the political implications of Rafanelli's conversion, we turn now to two works of fiction, the 1921 collection of short stories *Donne e femmine* and the 1929 novel *L'oasi. Romanzo arabo*. Far from seeking exemption from gender constraints, Rafanelli seems to turn to Islamicate culture to find something akin to a structure of feeling in which the gender binary appears in starker contrast. In itself, such a move is hardly surprising in the Orientalist field, where the harem serves as figure for the policing of gender segregation. Nor is reaffirmation of the gender binary rare as a reaction to modernization in the early twentieth century in Italy, particularly after the First World War; as has often been observed, the introduction of women into the workforce during the war produced a perceived threat to both traditional masculinity and traditional femininity. What is interesting about Rafanelli's case, however, is that the reaffirmation and biologization of sexual difference is accompanied by a figurative crossing of the divide between races, as well as the divide between human and non-human animals.

Animal Orientalism

Donne e femmine, a collection of short stories, is given a precise temporal and cultural frame; it begins "il primo giorno di Ramadan 1339" [the first day of Ramadan 1339] and ends with the dates 1921 (of the Christian era) and 1340 (of the Islamic era).[45] Within this Islamicized frame are contained 24 short sketches, all of which concern the relationship between the two terms of the collection's title: "women" and "females." At first glance, it is tempting to translate these terms into a post-Gayle Rubin vocabulary and to consider them an early intimation of the sex/gender system that was foundational to the development of US feminism in the second half of the twentieth century. In that case, the title would signal an interest in the correlation of cultural characteristics to what is conceptualized as biological sex.[46] Rafanelli's

44 Granata, *Lettere d'amore*, 25.

45 Leda Rafanelli, *Donne e femmine* (Milan: Casa Editrice Sociale, 1922), 7.

46 I refer of course to Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women" which introduced the sex/gender system to feminist theory. The original point of the distinction between sex and gender was to denaturalize the relation between the two terms, and show gender to

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interest, however, tends in the opposite direction, insisting instead on the imperviousness of gender/sex to political intervention, and on the lack of division between "women" and "females." The phrase "women and females" refers to both human and non-human females, who are consigned to a realm of biological reproduction where, ruled by a law of nature that is understood to enslave them, they are bound together by a figurative "chain" resistant to social change: "quella catena che nessuna uguaglianza sociale potrà mai o bestie o donne, – togliere di dosso alle femmine" (*Donne*, 244) [that chain that no social equality can ever remove from females, whether beasts or women]. This is a law of nature that applies to "femmine" of all species, and not to "maschi," and that has both Biblical and Darwinian roots. On the one hand, the notion that humans are merely another animal species, driven to reproduce by the logic of natural selection, is linked to a popularization of Darwin's work in what Michael Lundblad has called "the discourse of the jungle," a marrying of Darwin and Freud that was in the process of elaboration in the early twentieth century. In the "discourse of the jungle," the drive to reproduce through heterosexuality is naturalized as an "animal instinct" shared by species.[47] On the other, in its link to pain, this law of nature also recalls the Biblical injunction that women should suffer pain in childbirth: "legge di natura vuole che solo la femmina trascini la catena del dolore fisico, retaggio di madre in figlia" [the law of nature requires that only the female drag along the chain of physical pain, a heritage from mother to daughter] (*Donne*, 235). In the context of early twentieth-century Italian letters, this chain cannot but recall what Sibilla Aleramo, in her 1906 novel *Una donna*, had named the "monstrous chain" that links mothers to daughters, forming a continuum of maternal sacrifice. Aleramo's protagonist had asked: "Perché nella maternità adoriamo il sacrifizio? Donde è scesa a noi questa inumana idea dell'immolazione materna? Di madre in figlia, da secoli, si tramanda il servaggio. È una mostruosa catena" [Why do we adore sacrifice in maternity? Whence has fallen to us this inhuman idea of maternal immolation? This servitude has been handed down from mother to daughter, for centuries. It is a monstrous chain].[48] But whereas Aleramo's protagonist (and Aleramo

be a cultural construction that had more to do with politics and economics than with "nature." See "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210.

47 See Michael Lundblad, "The Epistemology of the Jungle: Progressive-Era Sexuality and the Nature of the Beast," *American Literature* 81:4 (2009), 747–73.

48 Sibilla Aleramo, *Una donna* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1982), 182.

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herself) broke this chain by committing the cultural crime of leaving her child, Rafanelli finds no such outlet, not even for her anarchist and revolutionary proletarian characters: "contro la Natura e' vano ribellarsi. È l'unica legge, quella, che pure noi anarchici riconosciamo" (*Donne*, 84) [It is useless to rebel against Nature. It is the only law that even we anarchists recognize], says the narrator in the tale of an anarchist woman and mother who sacrifices all "sull'altare della maternità" (*Donne*, 81) [on the altar of maternity]. Rather than rebel, in fact, the narrator of *Donne e femmine* repeatedly bemoans the passing of her mother's generation, painted as "un'epoca a parte – più intelligenti e libere delle nostre nonne, in generale, ma come esse amanti della casa e della famiglia" (*Donne*, 32) [an epoch apart – more intelligent and freer than our grandmothers, in general, but like them lovers of home and family]. Rafanelli's anti-modern stance in relation to gender is explicitly declared: "in questa epoca *dinamica*, nel trionfare di sensazioni superficiali, di azioni affrettate" [in this *dynamic* era, in the triumph of superficial sensations and hurried actions] the women of the past – "la donna fatta per l'amore sano e maschio, per la maternità vittoriosa" (*Donne*, 72) [the woman made for healthy and masculine love, for victorious maternity] – have been replaced by "caricature femminili, scheletri agili e svelti rivestiti di pelle rosa" (*Donne*, 76) [feminine caricatures, agile and svelte and dressed in pink skin] with their "petti piani di fanciullo'(76) [flat, boyish chests] and "senza fianchi" (142) [without hips]. This particular lament is typical of Italian culture in the 1920s, when the "donna crisi" or "crisis woman" modeled on the figure of the American "flapper" became the target of ridicule, and was soon to be juxtaposed to healthy fascist maternity: that "healthy and masculine love" that was to produce the sons of the nation.[49] In this respect, Rafanelli's critique of modern femininity seems to fall in line with her historical moment. Less commonplace is her openness to the interplay of humanity and animality in "femmine di ogni specie" [females of all species] (*Donne*, 239).

The two most interesting tales from this point of view are "Un grande amore" [A Great Love] and "La catena" [The Chain]. Both stories build upon reader's expectations that we are dealing with a human protagonist, a human agent, before it is revealed that a non-human animal is instead the protagonist of the story. "A Great Love" is presented as an "amore da romanzo," a novelistic love that "nessuna donna, forse, sarebbe capace di vivere" [no woman, perhaps, would be capable of living] – and, indeed, the "woman" in question is not a

49 On the "donna crisi," see Elisabetta Mondello, *La nuova italiana: La donna nella stampa e nella cultura del ventennio* (Rome: Riuniti, 1987).

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human one, but a female monkey, "femmina inferiore," "*Eloisa della sua specie*" [inferior female, Heloise of her species] (*Donne*, 162). To the "inferior female" is counterposed a pair of "esseri veramente superiori e perseguitati – due rivoluzionari sinceri e audaci che la legge aveva esiliato" [truly superior and persecuted beings – two sincere and audacious revolutionaries who had been sent into exile by law]: a couple named Luigia and Francesco, examples of the "animale uomo" [human animal], as Rafanelli herself puts it. Rafanelli's narrator (about whom more later) attempts at the outset to skew the opposition between "inferior" and "superior" animals, not only by stating explicitly that monkeys, like horses, camels, and dogs, are "animali superiori quanto, e delle volte più, dell'animale uomo" [superior animals as much, and sometimes more, than the human animal] but by making it clear that the human couple is "superior" not on account of species-belonging but rather as a result of their dedication to the cause of revolution and the *Internazionale*. What is more, in his 1892 *La coppia criminale*, the criminologist Scipio Sighele had singled out Heloise's love for Aberlard as an example of a "normal couple" in which a woman devotes herself fully to a man whose celebrity causes him to appear to be superior. For such a woman, Sighele writes, "l'arte di essere felice in amore consiste nel donar tutto senza chiedere nulla" [the art of finding happiness in love consists in giving all without asking for anything].[50] "Un grande amore" is thus an interspecies love story, in which the female monkey falls irrevocably in love with the male human, in "una corrispondenza di affetti più viva e completa che tra esseri della stessa specie" [a correspondence of affections more lively and complete than between beings of the same species] (*Donne*, 162). This *coup de foudre* takes place after a failed attempt on the part of the humans to provide her with an appropriate same-species mate with whom she could satisfy her "desiderio d'amore" [desire for love] (*Donne*, 165). That attempt fails because, in their ignorance, the human couple provides her with a young male monkey so different in age that he is treated by the female monkey as her child:

> Per fare un confronto – era come se ad una donna, nel pieno ardore della maternità, si mettesse fra le braccia un fanciullo decenne. A meno che non fosse una degenerata, una malata, quella donna deporrebbe sulla fronte del fanciullo un bacio materno. E così fece la povera scimmia, poichè una

50 See Scipio Sighele, *La coppia criminale (psicologia degli amori morbosi)*, 3rd edition (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1922), 37. I am grateful to Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg for pointing me in the direction of Sighele for this association with Heloise.

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> grande differenza di età – a gli uomini inapparente, – doveva certo correre tra lei e il maschio che avrebbe dovuto *fare razza* con lei. (*Donne*, 166)
>
> [To offer a comparison: it was as though one had put a ten-year-old boy into the arms of a woman in full bloom of motherhood. Unless she were a degenerate, a sick woman, she would place a maternal kiss on the child's brow. And that's what the poor monkey did, for certainly there must have been such a great age difference – not apparent to humans – between her and the male who was supposed to *breed* with her.]

By suggesting that the relation between the two is that of mother and child, the situation implicitly locates an incest taboo on the side of the nature/culture divide where it is supposedly not to be found, namely in the "natural" world of non-human animals. The evocation of that taboo, itself understood even by Levi Strauss himself to at once name the boundary between nature and culture, and yet also to belong to each, contributes to the impression that the line between species is not here an undivided one. It is on account of age difference, rather than species difference, that the monkey (who is not nameless, but whose English name the narrator has forgotten) cannot "fare razza": that is to say, she cannot "breed." Rafanelli has italicized the expression in her text, suggesting that we attend to it closely; translating literally, then, we would also have to say that she cannot "make species" or "make race." This in turn suggests that, however sentimentally, Rafanelli is also pursuing a mediation on what it means to "make species" or "make races." If to "breed" is to remain within and reinforce species taxonomies, and with them the racializations that they underwrite, the cross-species love story moves away from such reinforcement, only, however, to rebiologize gender and sex: "L'amore – il vero amore – si era acceso nel cuore della bestia. L'istinto – nel suo meraviglioso lavorio – aveva superato le distanze, tutte, e la scimmia si sentiva diversa dall'uomo solo per il sesso" (*Donne*, 167) [Love – true love – had been kindled in the animal's heart. Instinct – in its marvelous working – had overcome all the distances, and the monkey felt different from man only as far as gender/sex was concerned]. The obstacle to their union is not presented as an insuperable division between the species, but a separation brought about first by the man's illness and then by the political exile of the revolutionary couple; expelled from England, they are forced to leave the monkeys behind. The result in both cases is an almost pure suffering on the part of the monkey. When her beloved Francesco falls ill with typhoid she is no longer allowed in his room: "non potendo ragionare

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Ella soffriva, con tutta la capacità che aveva di soffrire. Se le bestie potessero piangere come noi uomini, Ella si sarebbe messa a piangere disperatamente" (*Donne*, 169) [not able to reason She suffered, with all the capacity she had to suffer. If beasts could weep like men, She would have wept in desperation]. And when left behind in a zoo (thought by the human couple to be a fate better than ending up in the hands of "gente girovaga che le avrebbero sfruttate e battute per *ammaestrarle*" (*Donne*, 174) [itinerant folks who would have exploited them and beat them in order to *train* them]), Luigia swears, still 20 years after the fact, "di averle viste cadere le lacrime" (176) [to have seen tears fall from her eyes]. The tale thus attributes to animals several of those qualities that humanism has been at such pains to deny them: history ("hanno la loro *storia* come gli uomini" [they have their *history* like men do] (*Donne*, 164) and the ability to suffer. The latter cannot help but call to mind the question that Jeremy Bentham posed regarding animals – "Can they suffer? – thereby reformulating the question that, since Aristotle, had dominated the Western philosophical tradition, namely whether animals can speak and reason, whether they can have the *logos*.[51] After Bentham, suggests Derrida, "the first and decisive question would rather be to know whether animals *can suffer.*"[52] In Rafanelli's story, the cause of suffering is not an insuperable division between species, but historical accident: history and politics. And the result of the monkey's suffering is a consolidation of a cross-species link between *femmine*:

> La Luigia, donna, piangeva pensando al dolore della femmina innamorata, che per la seconda volta – e questa volta per sempre! – si vedeva divisa

51 As Bentham puts it, "The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?" Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London: Pickering, 1828), 2: 236. On the importance of Bentham for arguments for equal consideration of the interests of non-human animals, see Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), especially Chapter One, "All Animals are Equal …," 5–18.

52 See Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Willis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 27. Derrida takes up the philosopheme of the division between the animal and the human, arguing that to suppose that such a division is an indivisible line is an "asininity," showing it instead to be "more than one internally divided line" (31) For a brilliant reading that tracks Derrida's cats, see Carla Freccero, "Cerchez la chatte: Derrida's Queer Feminine Animality," in *French Thinking about Animals*, ed. Louisa MacKenzie and Stephanie Posthumus (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015), 105–20.

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> dall'oggetto del suo amore senza poterne comprendere la ragione. Il sesso univa in una rara comprensione di intime sensazioni le due femmine, – poi che una passione d'amore fortemente sentita aveva innalzato la bestia alla sensibilità di una donna. Luigia – anima superiore – comprendeva il dolore della povera scimmia. (*Donne*, 174–75)
>
> [Luigia, woman, wept thinking of the suffering of the female in love who, for the second time – and this time forever! – saw herself divided from the object of her love without being able to understand the reason. Gender/sex united the two females in a rare comprehension of intimate feelings, for a strongly felt amorous passion had raised the animal to the sensibility of a woman. Luigia – superior soul – understood the suffering of the poor monkey.]

The division between "donne" and "femmine" is spanned by the non-human animal's suffering.[53]

We are, of course, not particularly surprised to see monkeys put to use in reaffirming or contesting the human/animal divide, to find them evoked in a discussion of racialization, or to find them in an Orientalizing context, given the history of primatology. After all, as Donna Haraway has pointed out:

> The signs of orientalist discourse mark primatology. But there, the scene of origins is not the cradle of civilization, but the cradle of culture, of human being distinct from animal existence. If orientalism concerns the western imagination of the origin of the city, primatology displays the western imagination of the origin of sociality itself, especially in the densely meaning-laden icon of "the family." … . Simian orientalism means that western primatology has been about the construction of the self from the raw material of the other, the appropriation of nature in the production of culture, the ripening of the human from the soil of the

53 In her discussion of the turn to alternative religious movements in late nineteenth-century England, Gauri Viswanathan has noted that attention to animal suffering linked women's movements and anti-vivisectionism to Theosophy: "The cross-hatching of philosophical and political aims in Theosophy and other spiritual movements in the nineteenth century reflected the concerns of a growing body of female adherents, who turned to these movements to map female suffering on a continuum that included animal suffering … the image of the suffering body collapses species differentiation, challenging the hierarchies kept in place." See "'Have Animals Souls?' Theosophy and the Suffering Body," *PMLA* 126:2 (2011): 441–42.

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> animal, the clarity of white from the obscurity of color, the issue of man from the body of woman, the elaboration of gender from the resource of sex, the emergence of mind by the activation of body.[54]

Rafanelli's stance as *Orienteuse* places her firmly on neither side of these divides –human and animal, white and color, gender and sex – as she attempts to find various ways to straddle them in her fictions.

Both a delay in identifying the species-belonging of its protagonist and a skewing of the dividing line between human and non-human animals also characterize the story "Una catena," where the racialization suggested by the expression "fare razza" is literalized. The story opens with a description of its protagonist: "Era nera come una schiava Sudanese, ma aveva abitudini da Sultana; amava restare per delle ore distesa, al sole, come un Idolo" [She was black like a Sudanese slave, but she had the habits of a Sultana; she loved to lie about for hours in the sun, like an Idol] (*Donne*, 236). Within the context of Rafanelli's work, it is by no means unprecedented to encounter a black character, and within the Orientalizing context of *Donne e femmine* the mention of a Sudanese slave and a Sultana cannot but evoke both the racial diversity of the Imperial harem and the stereotype of the leisurely life of its occupants: "ed è certa che non trovava mai lunga la giornata completamente passata in ozio" (*Donne*, 236) [it is certain that she never found her days, passed entirely at leisure, to be long], specifies the narrator. With no explicit subject given for the opening sentence – we know only her gender – one assumes that subject to be a human one, compared as she is to other humans. That assumption seems to be created only in order to be disrupted, for it is quickly revealed that she is not a black woman but a black cat who goes by the name of "*Suda* (*Nera* in linguaggio arabo)" [*Suda* (*Black* in Arabic)]. The comparison of human and non-human animals is then addressed explicitly by the narrator who, after a catalog of the beauties of various beasts – the triangular head of a snake, the undulating sway of a lizard – comments: "Si dice che il cane ha lo sguardo *umano*, ma si potrebbe anche dire che gli occhi umani, mesti, devoti, profondi, hanno sguardi da cane!" (*Donne*, 237) [They say that dogs have a *human* gaze, but you could also say that human eyes, when they are sad, devoted, and profound, have a dog's gaze!]. Rafanelli here suggests that we might reverse the move of anthropomorophism, which always takes the human as the grounding reference, and take our term of comparison instead

54 Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 10–11.

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from the non-human animal, and in particular from precisely what humanist discourse would deny the non-human animal: the gaze.

The opening racialization has the effect of linking the cat's blackness with historical instantiations of the enslavement of Africans, an association reinforced by the "chain" of the story's title.[55] At the story's edges, in fact, lies an implicit contrast between the possibility of equal rights for all men, and hence freedom from the shackles of chattel slavery, and the impossibility, as Rafanelli sees it, of liberation of women – both *donne* and *femmine* – from enslavement to the reproduction of the species. The contrast remains half hidden, since only the latter impossibility is openly declared in the story's final lines, after *Suda* has died giving birth to her second litter: "La femmina aveva piegato sotto il peso di *quella catena, che nessuna uguaglianza sociale potrà mai o bestie o donne, togliere di dosso alle femmine*" (244; Rafanelli's italics) [The female had given in under the weight of *that chain, that no social equality can ever remove from females, be they beast or woman*]. That Rafanelli did envision equality and social justice for people of color is made explicit elsewhere, in one of the first stories included in *Bozzetti sociali* [Social Sketches], a collection of tales that take up the lives of "sfruttati" [the exploited] and "ribelli" [rebels], and that are declared to reflect the ideas of their author. In "Fratello!" [Brother!], an African man joins a group of longshoremen at a small unnamed port. His fellow workers call him "il muto," the mute, even though, as the narrator makes clear, it is not because he is unable to speak his native tongue, but only because he is unable to speak Italian. The brief tales gives a sympathetic view of both the Italian workers and their African companion; when the man is newly arrived, the workers offer him "un poco di pane tolto alle loro bocche" [a bit of bread snatched from their mouths], and welcome him into their group. Rafanelli's physical description of the African pointedly departs from the racist stereotypes then current in contemporary descriptions, which frequently limited their telegraphic descriptions to the so-called "naso camuso," or snub nose, and large lips. Instead, the narrator notes that in the evenings, as the workers return

> tutti neri della polvere del carbone, con i visi strani dalle labbra rosse e delle palpebre rosa poichè la polvere non vi era penetrate, il negro era il

55 One link in the figurative chain formed by that association might lead us to remember that the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement that aimed to free slaves and recognize the rights of men without regard to race provided a model for feminists as well as for animal rights advocates. See Singer, *Animal Liberation*, and Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (New York: Mirror Books, 1988).

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> più bello di tutti. La polvere nera non faceva che mettere un velo opaco sulla sua pelle lucida, e le sue larghe spalle avevano pochi rivali. (*Bozzetti*, 26–27)
>
> [all black from the coal dust, with strange faces with red lips and pink eyelids where the dust had not penetrated, the black man was the most beautiful of all. The black dust only placed an opaque veil on his gleaming skin, and his wide shoulders had few rivals.]

Rather than stigmatizing difference, Rafanelli generalizes blackness as the distinctive feature of the workers, a professional "veil" deriving from their labor; the "muto" stands out among these bodies for an even more beautiful blackness, a "pelle lucida." Racial belonging is soon seconded by political belonging. Two years pass, and "il muto" bit by bit is able to say a word or two in Italian. And then comes the moment when a strike is declared, and the Italian workers worry that one among them, "il muto," out of a lack of ability to communicate linguistically and perhaps lack of solidarity with the cause as well, may present himself for work. Of course they need not have worried; when morning comes, "il muto" shows up not at the port but at the political meeting organized by the striking workers, where he is welcomed to general applause and asked to speak. Making an effort, "la sua fronte si contrasse per lo sforzo del cervello" [his forehead contracted on account of the effort of his brain], and with his "mani nere sul cuore" [black hands on his heart], he finally says: "io pure, fratello!" (*Bozzetti*, 29) [I, too, brother!]. The tale ends with an image of workers' solidarity that knows no barrier of race: "Nelle mani solidali che si stringevano nella vasta sala nuda sembrava di vedere il simbolo luminoso delle mani operaie che si stringono forte oltrepassando e abbattendo ogni pregiudizio di razza e di confine" (*Bozzetti*, 29) [In the solidary hands that joined in the vast, empty room, it was as though one saw the luminous symbol of workers hands that join together going beyond and demolishing all prejudices of race and border]. It is worth remembering that this story, and the collection in which it appears, was published in 1921, and so immediately upon the heels of the "biennio rosso," the "red two years" in which workers' movements organized massive demonstrations, strikes, and occupations of factories, especially in the northern and central parts of Italy; they were followed by the violent backlash that led to the March on Rome of the fascists in 1922. If the story is not subtle, it is at least in part because these were not subtle times for the politically active, whether on the right or the left. It is nonetheless remarkable to find such a declaration of solidarity across

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racial divisions in Italian literary production of the period, and it could not be clearer that Rafanelli envisioned social equality for men of all races.

Not so for relations between men and women, of all species. The alternative femininity that Rafanelli counterposes to modern, Western femininity creates a solidarity among "donne e femmine," females of all species, united in that enslavement to the supposed law of reproduction.[56] While buttressing the gender binary and soldering it to embodiment (in effect, asserting it as "sexual difference" rather than "gender"), Rafanelli simultaneously weakens the divisions between species. In *Donne e femmine* this emerges most clearly in the figure of the narrator, first introduced in the introduction, whose identity is only fully grasped in the final story, "Alpha e Omega." The "Alpha" there recalled is the beginning of the collection, when the narrator was first introduced in the "Introduction" entitled "Portrait." The opening lines read: "Donne che siete passate, che vi fate vedere, che passerete davanti a Lei – è inutile che vi mettete la maschera. Ella vi conosce tutte. È donna anche Lei – è femmina anche Lei. È vostra sorella per sesso, per anima, per mentalità" (*Donne*, 5) [You women

56 It is thus not surprising that Rafanelli's view of egalitarian feminism was a disparaging one. In 1904 she wrote: "Esso (il femminismo) è un frutto della società attuale, e perciò, dal mio punto di vista, frutto senza sostanza buona e pieno di sostanze nocive […] Mentre la donna proletaria si occupa più o meno energicamente a combattere l'oppressore, la donna borghese […] è insorta essa pure. Ma contro chi? Contro l'uomo; contro il maschio. Si, essa non ha fatto che una questione: il femminismo; non ha avuto che uno scopo: raggiungere l'uomo nei suoi studi; imitarlo nelle sue professioni, arrivare ad essere paragonata uguale. Il male è che è caduta nel ridicolo […] Forse la donna borghese troverà l'ostacolo alle sue idee nell'uomo e lo combatte, riuscendole certo più facile combattere il maschio che tutta una società […] il femminismo è un frutto nocivo della società presente, che non tende ad altro che a fare delle avvocatesse; le quali, come gli avvocati, saranno perfettamente inutili nella società avvenire, dal momento che noi, popolo, vorremmo rese inutili e quindi eliminate leggi a tribunali." Rafanelli, "Il femminismo," in *Il pensiero*, II, 17–18, (September 16, 1904). [Feminism is the fruit of present-day society, and for that reason, from my point of view, a fruit lacking in substance and full of harmful ingredients […] . While the proletarian woman is more or less energetically fighting the oppressor, the bourgeois woman […] has also arisen. But against whom? Against man, against males. Yes, she has only made one proposal, feminism; she has had only one goal, to keep pace with man in his studies, to imitate him in his professions, to succeed in being compared as equal. The bad thing is that she has ended up being ridiculous. […] Perhaps the bourgeois woman will find man to be an obstacle to her ideas, and fight him; certainly it is easier to fight a man than an entire society. […] Feminism is a harmful fruit of today's society, which tends only to produce women lawyers who, just like men lawyers, will be perfectly useless in the society of the future, since we, the people, want to render useless and then eliminate laws and courts.]

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who have passed by, who show yourselves, or who will pass before Her – it is pointless to put on a mask. She knows you all. She too is a woman, she too is female. She is your sister in sex, in soul, in mentality]. Of this "She" we know that She is to judge the women who pass before her, that she is not Christian and hence does not forgive ("non è cristiana e non perdona"), and that her name was once "Djali," glossed as "la donna che apparteneva a sè stessa "(*Donne*, 6) [the woman who belonged to herself] but is now "'Sahara,' nome dello stesso suo Impero senza sudditti" (7) [name of her own Empire without subjects]. Knowing as we do that "Djali" was in fact one of the names that Rafanelli had given herself in her autobiographical writings, glossing it in precisely this way, and that "Sahra" is the pseudonym used by Rafanelli in authoring *Incantamento*, the reader logically assumes that she has all the information she needs about Rafanelli's pose as a Muslim woman, here setting herself up in judgment of her similars.[57] So much is confirmed by the epigraph with which the collection begins, a Turkish saying according to which "the forest is only burned by its own trees," and reinforced by a few scattered first person singular references on the part of the narrator, who reminds us of her "sobrietà di beduino" (*Donne*, 184) [Bedouin sobriety] and her appearance as "bruna, magra, olivastra come una beduina" (299) [dark, skinny, olive-skinned like a Bedouin]. At the end of the collection, however, the "omega" upsets that assumption when we learn that the narrator of the entire collection claims to be both a human and a non-human animal: both a camel named Djali and a human named Sahara, into whom the Camelian soul has transmigrated. "Era un cammello femmina, e il suo padrone le aveva dato il nome di Djali … . Aveva camminato molto, troppo, attraverso le strade bianche delle città orientali e sopra le sabbie gialle del Deserto ardente" (*Donne*, 338) [She was a female camel, and her owner had given her the name Djali … . She had walked a great deal, too much, across the white streets of Oriental cities and on the yellow sands of the burning Desert]. At the end of her life the camel reflects upon her past, flying in the face yet again of humanist assumptions about the various capacities of which animals are presumably deprived: "ricordava ogni episodio. Gli uomini credono che le bestie non ricordino, e sono anche in questo in errore. Le bestie ricordano tutto; anche dopo anni riconoscono le strade già percorse" (*Donne*, 340) [she remembered every episode. Men believe that beasts do not remember, and they are wrong about this, too. Beasts remember everything; even after years they recognize the streets they have traveled]. The choice of this particular

57 Curiously, "Djali" is also the name of Emma Bovary's greyhound in Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.

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non-human animal brings with it both an Orientalizing landscape and a marriage of Buddhism and Nietzschean *amor fati*.[58] Dying in the shadow of the Sphinx, the camel's last breath brings her to remember her first, and then "una commozione dolce, umana – super-umana – la vinse, la esaltò. Nella sua favella disse il dolce nome che la fondeva con l'universo per l'eterna legge dell'*eterno ritorno*" (*Donne*, 348) [a sweet commotion – human, superhuman – came over her, exalted her. In her language she said the sweet word that confounded her with the universe according to the eternal law of the *eternal return*].[59] The last story thus returns us to the first, and prompts us to reread the phrase "non è cristiana." If at first we assumed that it referred to religious affiliation alone, we now must add a resignification of its familiar usage in Italian, in which "un cristiano" is also synonymous with "human being." (To say, for example, "non c'era un cristiano" is to say that "there was not a soul," not a human presence.) Djali/Sahara would be "Christian" in neither sense, and the crossing of the line dividing Christian from Muslim, in Rafanelli's Orientalism, comes to be co-terminous with a crossing of the line between human and non-human animal, as humanism has constructed it, and between East and West, as previous Orientalisms had constructed it.[60]

58 As has been repeatedly noted by recent critics, Rafanelli had an eclectic sense of eastern religions; she declared her "fondata fede nella reincarnazione" [grounded faith in reincarnation] (*Una donna e Mussolini*, 44), and believed Egypt to be not only her "patria di elezione" [chosen homeland] but also her "antica patria" [ancient homeland] (*Una donna e Mussolini*, 75); late in life in a 1967 letter reproduced in *Leda Rafanelli – Carlo Carrà: Un romanzo. Arte e politica in un incontro ormai CELEBRE*! she writes that she had been "fedele al metodo yoga" [faithful to the practice of yoga] for her entire life (13). Enrico Ferri has undertaken the most complete examination of the various threads that formed her contradictory system of beliefs in "Leda Rafanelli: un anarchismo islamico?" Nietzsche's works were widely cited in anarchist circles, and a number of translations brought out by the various publishing ventures of Rafanelli's companion Giuseppe Monnani: the Libreria Editrice Sociale (1909–1914) and la Casa Editrice Sociale (1920–1926) brought out *L'anticristo* (1913), *Aurora* (1925), and *Il crepuscolo degli idoli* (1926?), in addition to works by Max Stirner, Enrico Malatesta, Kropotkin, William Morris, and Charles Darwin, among others. See Franco Schirone, "La Casa Editrice Sociale. Un esperimento di cultura anarchica (1909–1933)," in *Leda Rafanelli tra letteratura e anarchia,* ed. Fiamma Chessa, 81–142.

59 In *L'oasi. Romanzo arabo* (Milan: Casa Editrice Monanni, 1929), Rafanelli spells out her zoopoetics: "Gli Arabi erano come I cammelli – forti, tenaci, fatalisti, pazienti e solenni – mentre gli Occidentali erano come i cavalli – forti ma ombrosi, intelligenti ma irrequieti" (113) [Arabs were like camels – strong, tenacious, fatalistic, patient and solemn – whereas Westerners were like horses – strong but moody, intelligent but restless].

60 The zoomorphic adoption of the camel as narrator embraces animality in a way

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Colonial Romances

The alternative, anti-modern femininity we have seen in various guises finds its fullest expression in the anti-colonialist novel *L'oasi. Romanzo arabo* [Oasis:An Arab Novel]. Rafanelli presents herself as its translator, and in a brief preface invents a profile of its fictional French author:

> Nella letteratura coloniale francese questa *Oasi* di Etienne Gamalier ha un posto speciale. L'autore ha idee personalissime in fatto di colonie e di popolazioni soggette al dominio europeo. Egli non ripete il solito motivo della letteratura ufficiale. È attratto dai paesi a dalle genti di colore per un loro fascino particolare, per trovare in essi l'ingenuità e la sincerità della vita e delle passioni, frutto di paziente indagine e di amorevole simpatia. Per lui l'Oriente – e specialmente Africa e l'Egitto – è la sola terra dove si può correre in piena libertà l'avventura della vita. Tutti gli altri problemi della Civiltà europea gli sono estranei.[61]
>
> [*Oasis* by Etienne Gamalier occupies a special place in French colonial literature. The author has very personal ideas about colonies and populations subject to European domination. He does not repeat the usual leitmotif of official literature. He is drawn to the lands and to people of color by a particular charm of theirs, to find in them an authenticity and sincerity of life and of the passions, fruit of a patient study and of loving sympathy. For him, the Orient – and especially Africa and Egypt – is the only land where the adventure of life can be experienced in full freedom. All the other problems of European Civilization are foreign to him.]

By 1929 a simple pseudonym may no longer have seemed to provide sufficient protection from political and personal retaliation, as it had in 1920, when Rafanelli published *L'incantamento* under the pseudonym Sahra. Not only had Mussolini consolidated his control of the fascist regime by this

reminiscent of what Neel Ahuja calls "the animal mask," which he analyzes as both "an ironic stance provisionally embracing animality" and a form of postcolonial critique: "a common strategy for disentangling race and species." See Neel Ahuja, "Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World," *PMLA* 124:2 (2009): 558.

61 Etienne Gamalier, *L'oasi. Romanzo arabo. Traduzione di Leda Rafanelli* (Milan: Casa editrice Monanni, 1929), n.p.

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point, but, as Mattia Granata reports, he had had Rafanelli placed under daily surveillance, a practice which lasted throughout the *ventennio*.[62] One may therefore speculate that the setting of the novel is similarly a ruse meant to ward off censorship; set in Tunisia, the novel's critique of colonialism appears aimed exclusively at the French, and there is no mention of the Italian colonial ventures then fully in swing. If this has the effect of muting the critique, it also functions to extract Rafanelli from one of the tasks of the "official literature" that was also then advocated by the regime, namely to garner support for the regime's imperialist ventures and inculcate a national colonial identity.[63]

To what degree and in what way Rafanelli might be said to have "very personal ideas about colonies" and to be "drawn to people of color" may be gauged by a comparison of her work to the "official literature" that she invokes in this preface, as well as to the "colonial literature" that preceded her. To Giovanna Tomasello we owe an overview of such literature; beginning with her 1985 *La letteratura coloniale italiana dalle avanguardie al fascismo* and continuing with the 2004 *L'Africa tra mito e realtà: storia della letteratura coloniale*, Tomasello has traced the relation of Italian writers to the colonial enterprise from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. Both elite and popular writers must be counted among their numbers; both Gabriele D'Annunzio and F. T. Marinetti traded in exoticist imagery and pro-colonialist rhetoric, while the wildly popular Emilio Salgari might be said to have fostered anticipatory fantasies of colonial expansion among readers young and old in his adventure tales.[64] By the 1920s a colonial literature had indeed been made "official" by governmental initiatives

62 Granata, *Lettere d'amore*, 47, no. 131.

63 This is not to say that such an enterprise is unimaginable in the case of Tunisia on the part of Italian writers during this period. A case in point would be Margherita Sarfatti's nationalistic tract *Tunisiaca*, brought out by the far more mainstream publishing house Mondadori in 1924. In it, Sarfatti laments what she views as Italy's missed opportunity in Tunisia in the nineteenth century; the Italian population had in fact outnumbered the French when it became a French protectorate in 1881. An 1896 decree, which allowed Italians residing in Tunisia for as long as several generations to maintain their Italian citizenship, had been revoked in 1921, and they were at that point threatened, so writes Sarfatti, with "de-nationalization" every three months. See Margherita Sarfatti, *Tunisiaca* (Milan: Mondadori, 1924). On the genre of the colonial novel as a tool designed to inculcate a national colonial identity among the masses, see Robin Pickering-Iazzi, "Mass Mediated Fantasies," in *A Place in the Sun*, ed. Patrizia Palumbo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

64 I am thinking here of Susanne Zantop's work on anticipatory fantasies in German popular literature in her *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

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such as the "Concorso di Letteratura Coloniale," sponsored by the Ministry of the Colonies, which actively promoted journals such as *Oltremare*, founded in 1926, as a tool to prepare public opinion for the imperialistic perspective of the Duce.[65] Winner of the 1926 Concorso was Mario Dei Gaslini's *Piccolo amore beduino* [Little Bedouin Love], which we will take as a point of comparison to *L'oasi*.[66] Like *L'oasi*, *Piccolo amore beduino* centers its plot on an interracial romance, a principal convention of Italian colonial literature in the early half of the century, and, like *L'oasi*, it deploys the familiar topoi of eastern indolence, Muslim fatalism, and the Orient as the place where "the adventure of life," as Rafanelli put it, may be played out in freedom. By the 1920s, in fact, these topoi were so familiar as to prompt calls among those favoring the colonialist project to dispense with them; Tomasello cites one Osvaldo Guida who, in a 1929 issue of the journal *Oltremare*, complained that "after seventeen years of Mediterranean colonialism:" "basta col deserto e le oasi, con le arsicce sabbie infuocate, col sole ardente, col fascino delle notti arabe, con l'orientalismo strafalcionario della Libia, con la complicazione delle donne indigene, con la rassegnazione mussulmana, con la eterna fatalità, col più ancora eterno fatalismo" (*L'Africa tra mito e realtà*, 144) [We've had it with the desert and the oases, with the burning desert sands, with the hot sun and the charm of Arabian nights, with the bogus Orientalism of Libya, with the complication of indigenous women, with Muslim resignation, with eternal destiny, with the even more eternal fatalism]. None of these topoi is in short supply in the authors here under consideration (with the exception of the bogus Orientalism of Libya in Rafanelli's case); our task is to attempt to determine whether, and in what ways, these topoi might be deployed to differing ideological ends.

65 See Giovanna Tomasello, *L'Africa tra mito e realtà: storia della letteratura coloniale* (Rome: Sellerio, 2004). Other such journals included *L'Impero illustrato*, *L'Italia coloniale*, *L'azione Rassegna di studi etiopici*, *Rivista coloniale*, *Rivista della Tripolitana*, and so on. On the colonial novel, see also Maria Pagliara, "Faccetta nera," in *I bestseller del ventennio: Il regime e il libro di massa*, ed. Gigliola De Donato and Vanna Gazzola Stacchini (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1991), 365–79; Mario Isnenghi, *L'Italia del fascio* (Florence: Giunti, 1996), 213–32; Laura Ricci, *La lingua dell'impero: Comunicazione, letteratura e propaganda nell'età del colonialismo italiano* (Rome: Carocci, 2005), 95–151; Giulietta Stefani, *Colonia per maschi. Italiani in Africa Orientale: Una storia di genere* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2007).

66 Tomaselli claims that the prize was not about the novel, but about the man: Gaslini was a career military officer, an army captain who served under General Cantore in Libya during the Italo-Turkish war (1911–12) (145). In 1926–27 Dei Gaslini was the director of the journal *Esotica: mensile di letteratura coloniale*, which was subsequently absorbed into *Oltremare* in 1927.

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Let us begin with *Piccolo amore beduino*, whose title page proudly proclaims: "quest'opera ha ottenuto il premio di diecimila lire, assegnato al vincitore del Concorso di Letteratura Coloniale, bandito con Decreto ministeriale dal Governo Italiano. Marzo 1926" [this work won the prize of ten thousand lire, assigned to the winner of the Colonial Literature Competition, sponsored by Ministerial Decree of the Italian Government].[67] The novel is rife with description and short on action; in its first four pages we learn that its protagonist is a nameless 18-year-old Italian male in love with young Bedouin girl named Nica, whose face he has never seen; that "love is a stranger that knocks at your door'; that Bedouins are fatalistic; that the destiny of Arab women is to obey; that "only with love does one construct great and sublime things'; and that, in the distance, soldiers go off "to the game of war." When, where, why? These are questions of little importance for the novel, which is principally concerned with emotional states, and in particular with a male sentimentality and a masculinity still in the making. We do eventually learn that the protagonist is an officer in the Italian army who is in Cyrenaica, the eastern region of what is now known as Libya, where his task appears to be to supervise the lineman (the "guardiafili") who maintain the phone lines, while in the distance the rebel "Fuarez" are being "subjugated" ("sottomessi"); the "Fuarez" appear to be the fictionalized stand-in for the Senussi, who indeed resisted Italian subjugation from the Italo-Turkish war onwards. The protagonist's departure at the end of the novel, to return to his homeland where duty calls, leaves us still with no definite historical reference point, whether during or after the Italo-Turkish war, whether on the eve of, or after, the First World War.[68] With this vague historical setting in the background, the longings and moods of the protagonist as evoked by Orientalizing tableaux take center stage. Colonialism in *Piccolo amore beduino* is not so much an action as an atmosphere; not a plot but a concatenation of scenes and states of emotion transmitted through noun phrases, and from which the observing agent is often absent. An example from early on in the novel describes a *souk* (market) and is offered as illustration of an "inconsolable hour, tragic, mystical, full of mystery":

67 Mario Dei Gaslini, *Piccolo amore beduino* (Milan: Tipografia dei Fratelli Magnani, 1926), 4.

68 Brian McLaren's description of the novel as a "semiautobiographical story about the experiences of a rather ordinary military officer in Tripolitania just prior to World War I" is probably correct in pinpointing its historical moment. I am more interested in the fact that the novel itself does not provide us with this information, preferring to evoke an atmosphere vaguely tethered to an enterprise that will be familiar to the reader in only a general way.

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> Qualche luce: gente che tornava dalla preghiera: riflesso di vetri: testoni incorniciati da turbanti: clamidi lunghe intorno a corpi obesi: sfuggire di ragazzi e di donne da una penombra all'altra: poche parole: qualche grido di richiamo, confusione di belati e abbaiamenti lontani: tentativo di stelle sopra i terrazzi. Ricami di palme e di intagli. Un noioso stridente lamento di cammelli sdraiati tra carrette, casse, sacchi e stracci. Tristezza. (Gaslini, *Piccolo amore beduino*, 37)

> [A few lights: people returning from prayer: reflection of windows: large heads crowned with turbans: long tunics around obese bodies: the fleeing of children and women from one shadow to another: few words: a couple of greetings called out: confusion of distant bleating and barking: faint twinkling of stars above terraces. Embroidery of palms and intaglios. An irritating, strident complaint of camels lying among carts, cases, sacks and rags. Sadness.]

If tableaux served to fix and manage threatening difference in Nizzoli's text, here the tableau collects fragments drawn from a now familiar exoticism in order to exteriorize an emotion. "People who return from prayer," "embroideries of palms," and "cries of recall" are spread across a single plane: fragmentation de-realizes and equalizes the noun phrases. The atmosphere evoked is repeatedly described as dream-like and confused, and serves to muffle and veil the political realities to which the novel makes indirect reference. The novel itself wants to attribute this drive to de-realize to yet another Orientalist topos, that of the *fata morgana*, the mirage:

> Ancora più in là, oltre il luogo ove moriva la eco triste ed evanescente dei segnali di tromba, una muraglia bianca, forse una duna, forse un castello di marmo, forse un [sic] borgata di cristallo, di zucchero o di neve, inalzava una sconfinata fata morgana.
>
> Anche le donne, oltre le tende, si sarebbero perdute ben presto in quella gran favola bianca del sole, poema di luce e di sabbia, cantato dalla natura in festa. (Gaslini, *Piccolo amore beduino*, 16)

> [Farther along, beyond where the sad and fleeting eco of trumpets died, a white wall, perhaps a dune, perhaps a marble castle, perhaps a village made of crystal or sugar or snow, arose a boundless *fata morgana*.
>
> Even the women, beyond the tents, would soon be lost in that great white fable of sun, poem of light and sand, sung in celebration by nature.]

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Originally named for the fairy of Arthurian legend and denoting a phenomenon characteristic of the Strait of Messina, the *fata morgana* here morphs into a white wall that blocks vision with fairy-tale images of castles of sugar or snow. Human figures are lost in the white-out effect attributed to the mirage, replaced by the "white fable of sun, poem of light and sand." Effaced as well is the blackness that might otherwise have been a visible attribute of the women referred to in the passage. Such a racializing white-out effect is frequently associated with the desert in colonialist cultural constructions; another case in point would be its use in Augusto Genina's 1936 film *Lo squadrone bianco* [The White Squadron], which also takes place in the Libyan desert. In the film the desert similarly serves, as Giorgio Bertellini has so aptly put it, as a "training ground for a white male's identity formation and development into adulthood."[69] Bertellini argues that the rendering of the desert as an abstract vastness, in which images of white-clad African soldiers and white dromedaries are intercut with images of a "stark white sky," has the effect of making invisible the troops' blackness, erasing and whitening it, as the title, "the white squadron," suggests. In *Piccolo amore beduino* the white-out acts in collusion with an insistence upon the protagonist's youth to muffle the political stakes of the soldiers' presence. Although we know that the protagonist is on the way to Benghazi, that the rebel "Fuarez" are being subjugated, that one old Arab seems to make a Roman salute, the protagonist is portrayed as a political innocent even as he mouths generic ideals:

> Io, completamente ignaro e noncurante di teorie politiche, capivo poche cose, le stesse che capisco oggi: Dio, la Famiglia, la Patria e l'Uomo: l'uomo figlio delle prime tre, simbolo di dominazione e di casa dominata, l'uomo degno se capace di obbeddire tacendo e operando, indegno se inetto a dare una parte di sè, la migliore, alla sua Patria ed alla collettività.
>
> Veramente non pensavo tutto questo perchè camminavo sul filo di un sogno. (Gaslini, *Piccolo amore beduino*, 34)

> [Completely ignorant and oblivious to political theories, I understood only a few things, the same that I understand today: God, Family, Fatherland and Man: man the son of the first three, symbol of domination and of the

69 See Giorgio Bertellini, "Whitened Heroes, Auditory Rhetoric, and National Identity in Interwar Italian Cinema," in *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present*, ed. Patrizia Palumbo (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 266.

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> dominated home, man worthy if he is able to obey and work in silence, unworthy if incapable of giving a part of himself, the best part, to his Fatherland and to the collectivity.
>
> Actually, I didn't think any of this because I was walking on the thread of a dream.]

God, family, country: the text rarely moves beyond a generic patriotism that could as easily have been that of Liberal Italy as of the Fascist regime, and the protagonist's youth can be read both as embodying the fascist exaltation of "giovinezza" [youth] and as alibi for the lack of a more strongly articulated political awareness. The Oriental "dream" evoked here is split between nostalgia for his mother and motherland, desire for the Bedouin girl Nica, and a vague celebration of a still infantile masculinity. Cyrenaica exerts the "evocative power of childhood" on the protagonist ("questo paese … esercita su di me la potenza evocatrice della lontana infanzia" [Gaslini, *Piccolo amore beduino*, 120]):

> Il mio stesso pensiero è così pieno di tristi e nostalgiche intimità, che non odo il rumore delle macchine nè vedo la nudità desolante della strada, ma mi pare d'essere rimasto solo nella mia casa, nell'ora dello spegnifuoco e delle panzane, e scorgo così bene i capelli della mia mamma che rammenda sotto la lanterna, da crederla vicina e sentirla vivere. (Gaslini, *Piccolo amore beduino*, 28)
>
> [My own thoughts are so full of sad and nostalgic intimacies, that I do not hear the noise of cars nor see the distressing nakedness of the street, but I seem to have remained alone at home, at the hour of the curfew and tall tales, and so clearly do I see the hair of my mother as she darns beneath the lantern, that I believe she is near and feel she is alive.]

Suffering from a "mal di mamma" [longing for mamma] rather than a "mal d'Africa" [longing for Africa], the protagonist's sentimentality is said to blind him to his surroundings at the same time as it frees the writer from the task of producing a more "realistic" narrative. The desert becomes a screen onto which themes and rhetoric loosely drawn from a watered-down D'Annunzio are projected, as both Tomasello and Brian McLaren have noted.[70] In the

70 Tomasello has suggested, in fact, that Gaslini's text seems to mark a moment of

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following passage, one hears echoes of the imperialistic rhetoric that saw in Libya Italy's "quarta sponda," its fourth shore, and a landscape where the adventure of masculinity could be played out:

> Andiamo così, cavalieri dell'ideale, nella ardente terra che fu di Roma, recando la maschilità gagliarda del nostro spirito di ventura, serrando il pugnale e agitando il fucile, mentre i cavanieri cantano le lodi di Dio. (Gaslini, *Piccolo amore beduino*, 66)
>
> [And so off we go, knights of the ideal, in the burning land that was Rome's, bringing to it the vigorous masculinity of our spirit of adventure, grasping our daggers and waving our rifles, while the caravaners sing the praises of God.]

In fact, however, for most of the narrative, this warlike masculinity remains elusive for the protagonist, characterized as "un ragazzone" (162), a big kid, and lost in longing for the young Bedouin girl "bambola beduina" (162) [Bedouin doll].[71]

Once this love is consummated, it must be truncated; in Gaslini's novel, the interracial romance is impossible because of a prohibition represented as emanating from the state (although in fact conjugal relations between Italian men and African women were criminalized only in 1937):

> Gli è che questo amore è basato su argille, su nuvole, su impossibili realtà. Un ufficiale bianco non può amare una donna nera: cade nel ridicolo! Se lo sapessero un ordine troncherebbe subito il bel sogno. (Gaslini, *Piccolo amore beduino*, 166)
>
> [It is because this love is built on sand, on clouds, on impossible realities. A white officer cannot love a black woman: he would be seen as ridiculous. If it were known, an order would immediately truncate the beautiful dream.]

transition from a literature that does politics, such as that of D'Annunzio, to a literature subordinated to politics.

71 The "warlike masculinity" takes a different turn in only one chapter, "Il racconto del brigante Salem Barui," which recounts a childhood friendship between two boys that blooms into a bromance and elicits a desire for a world without women.

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On his last night of Bedouin love, the protagonist offers Nica a different explanation; deploying the topos of Muslim fatalism, he exhorts her to submit to the inevitability of the end of their love in a call to obey that conveniently resonates with fascist rhetoric at the same time as it ventriloquizes the Muslim mandate to submit to God: "'Bisogna obbedire a quello che sta scritto!' – 'Insciallah!' ripose la fanciulla" (Gaslini, *Piccolo amore beduino*, 185) ["One must obey what is written!" – "Insha'Allah!" answered the girl]. Submission to Allah is thus married to submission to the colonial order of things. Fittingly, the protagonist's fate returns him to the fascist order of things: "La bandiera! … . Noi la salutiamo sull'attenti, e pare che la saluti il nostro orgoglio gagliardo di latini figli di Roma imperiale" (Gaslini, *Piccolo amore beduino*, 192) [The flag! … .We stand at attention and salute it, and it seems that our vigorous pride of Latin sons of imperial Rome salutes it].

Rafanelli's "Arab Romance"

The difficulties of interracial romance were a constant concern of Leda Rafanelli's, both in her life and in her writings, and provide the narrative focus of *L'oasi. Romanzo arabo*. In the foreground is the romance between Henry Nattier, a French author of exotic novellas and colonialist propaganda, and Gamra, a young Arab woman who is said to embody "la perfetta bellezza del tipo bedouino" (*L'oasi*, 16) [the perfect beauty of a Bedouin type]. Set in Tunisia, the story begins in Islamic year 1332 (Christian era 1913), and concludes after the end of World War I. Gamra has been disowned by her family on account of her relation to an "infidel," and befriended by Henry's friend Jeanne, a French convert to Islam who has spent 30 of her 50 years in the "Orient." The dialogue between the two Europeans opens the novel, and quickly establishes Henry as the bearer of a "Western lie" and the Arabic-speaking Jeanne as the spokeswoman for an "Arab truth." The Western lie in question is that of monogamy, as it was in *Incantamento*: the "volgare menzogna dell'amore europeo – quell'amore che vuole promettere l'impossibile" (*L'oasi*, 25) [vulgar lie of European love – that love which promises the impossible]. If an analogy between conquest of the indigenous woman and conquest of lands provides the ground for most colonial romances, including that of Gaslini, here it is unfaithfulness that serves as the shared term that crosses the cultural divide. Rafanelli translates religious terms into amorous ones: "l'Arabo non tradisce mai l'amore. Ecco perchè vi chiama tutti e con grande sicurezza: *infedeli*" (*L'oasi*, 10) [Arabs never betray love. That's why they call you all,

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and with great certainty: *infidels*], says Jeanne to Henry. The impossibility of interracial romance for the likes of Henry comes not from a prohibition from the state, as it did for Gaslini, but from the inevitability of his betrayal. As long as he is a religious infidel he will also be an amorous one. The obstacle to interracial union is not race understood as somatic feature or skin color, but race understood as religious and cultural affiliation; unlike somatic race, the novel is at pains to tell us, religious and cultural affiliation can be changed. The characters of Jeanne and that of another European convert to Islam, the former Marcel François, now Sidi-el-Kirim, are both meant to illustrate this "Arab truth": the Arabic-speaking Jeanne has "un'anima veramente mussulmana" (*L'oasi*, 83) [a truly Muslim soul], and the Arabic-speaking Sidi-el-Kirim "diventato un Arabo anche lui, non solo nell'anima come lo sono io," says Jeanne, "ma anche nell'aspetto" (*L'oasi*, 168) [he, too, having become an Arab, not only in soul, as I am, but also in appearance]. Not only are both converts to Islam, but both have interracial romances of their own: successful ones. By offering examples of successful unions, Rafanelli disjoins the critique of colonialism from a critique of interracial romance; we might say, in fact, that while Henry's relation to Gamra is revealed to be a colonialist romance, Jeanne and Sidi-el-Kerim's relation to their Muslim spouses might be termed examples of the "Arab romance" of Rafanelli's subtitle.

We are here a far cry from the politically clueless protagonist of *Piccolo amore beduino*. As we have come to expect by now, Rafanelli gives her characters starkly delineated political views; whereas Henry celebrates "le alte ragioni politiche e sociali che costringon i Governi Europei a impatronirsi di terre lontane, per farsene Colonie della Madre Patria" (*L'oasi*, 171) [the lofty political and social reasons that force European Governments to take possession of faraway lands, to make them the Colonies of the Fatherland], Jeanne scoffs at his "aspirazioni e le vostre idee di colonialista or meglio, di … conquistatore di Popoli creati per essere liberi" (*L'oasi*, 170) [aspirations and ideas of a colonialist or better … of a conqueror of Peoples created to be free]. At the center of the novel, in fact, is a dialogue between Henry and Sidi-el-Kirim, who formulates a direct critique of the literary use of the colonial-ist romance:

> Come stanno le cose, il dipingere, e più lo scrivere come fate voi, è poesia da vendere, piace, rendere "interessante" lo scrittore, ma per chi sa vedere l'anima dietro le parole è poesia falsa, è semplice commercio di cose rubate! I superficiali che vi leggono e vi credono, vi stimano capaci di amare tutto un popolo, mentre, in realtà, amate al più qualche donna

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> d'Oriente, e pur che sia molto bella. So che anche voi avete scelto una fanciulla Berbera … . (*L'oasi*, 182)
>
> [The way things are now, your painting, and even more your writing, is poetry for sale, that pleases, that makes the writer "interesting," but for s/he who is able to see the soul behind the words, it is false poetry, it is simply commodification of stolen things! The superficial ones who read and believe you, think are you capable of loving an entire people, when in reality, at most you love a couple of Oriental women, and then only if she is very beautiful. I know you too have chosen a Berber girl … .]

The final points of suspension are Rafanelli's, and mark what goes without saying: that among the "stolen things" in which Henry (or Gaslini) traffics is the stereotype of Berber women in particular as beautiful; the "almost white" Arab woman is routinely preferred to the black African woman in these texts, according to a racializing hierarchy of somatic traits.[72] The contrast between the two is established at the opening of the novel, in a comparison between the black Riscia, of whose "viso schiacciato" (*L'oasi*, 11) [crushed face] Henry speaks with disgust, and Gamra, the young Bedouin who "risaltava come una nota di esotismo pur nella sua terra" (*L'oasi*, 11) [stood out like a note of exoticism even in her own land]. This is not to say that Rafanelli herself is vaccinated against such stereotypes; on the contrary, in choosing a Bedouin woman as the female protagonist of her novel she likewise relies upon the Orientalist notion that Bedouin femininity (and masculinity, for that matter) is particularly well-defined. If the Bedouin was, for Richard F. Burton, a paragon of manliness, here Gamra serves to figure the strengthening of gender constraints that Rafanelli seems to seek in Islamicate cultures.

But there is gender trouble in this oasis. From the outset, Jeanne has been masculinized, characterized as an "Amazon" whose age we are given to understand places her beyond sexuality in relation to Henry, and therefore not liable to create jealousy in Gamra: "ora sono per tutti un buon compagno," she declares to Henry: "È in me, ora, una forza virile, serena, fiera" (*L'oasi*, 60). [now I am a good companion for all … there is in me, now, a virile, serene, proud force]. Yet it was not always so. Years before, Jeanne had lived her own experience of betrayal at the hands of a man, and prefaces her

72 On this hierarchy of ethnic beauty, see Stefani, *Colonia per maschi*, 102. It is my impression that "Bedouin" and "Berber" are used interchangeably by both Rafanelli and Dei Gaslini.

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account of it in terms of a change of gender: "Da molti anni vivo come fossi un uomo, ma sono stata donna, elegante, raffinata, gentile; donna in tutta la complessità della parola" (*L'oasi*, 62) [I've lived as though I were a man for many years now, but I was a woman, elegant, refined, noble; a woman in all the complexity of the word]. As a woman, she consciously sought a man to satisfy her "bisogno di vivere fisiologicamente, di unirmi ad un uomo" [need to live physiologically, to join myself to a man] (*L'oasi*, 65), but her choice falls upon a gold-digging cad whose plan she overhears in a scenario that she herself notes recalls Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*: "Ricordate quel romanzo del nostro Gautier? *La madamigella Maupin* … Ella pure ascolta ciò che gli uomini, giovani, sanno dire delle donne" (*L'oasi*, 67) [Do you remember that novel of our Gautier? *Mademoiselle Maupin* … she, too listens to what young men say about women]. Intertextual literary references are rare in Rafanelli's work in general, as they are here in *Oasis*, where reference is made to only one other literary figure, and that is Pierre Loti, cited by Sidi-el Kirim as "the only friend of Islam" among French writers. What makes the reference to *Mademoiselle de Maupin* interesting, however, is that not only does Mlle de Maupin overhear men's conversations but she is able to do so because she herself is dressed as a man. Mademoiselle de Maupin, too, "lives as a man," and in fact seduces, unintentionally, both the male and female characters of the novel. As Jennifer Waelti-Walters has argued, the context of Gautier's text remains a heterosexual one in which the cross-dressed woman serves as marker of the dissoluteness of the social group represented, rather than as the sign of same-sex desire.[73] In *Oasis* at stake is neither dissoluteness nor same-sex desire; rather, the mobility of Jeanne's gender seems to be coincident with her transfer to Tunisia (after her discovery that her fiancé, interested only in her money, had already taken a lover) and satisfaction of her need for love "liberamente" [freely] with her Egyptian servant, Abdallah, "l'essere più fedele che Dio abbia messo sulla mia strada" (*L'oasi*, 74) [the most faithful being whom God has put on my path]. For there are in fact two other interracial romances in the novel, in addition to that between Henry and Gamra: the romance of Jeanne and her former servant Abdallah, and the romance of Sidi-el-Kirim and his unnamed wife. These are "faithful" interracial marriages, in contrast to the relationship of Henry the infidel; "fidelity" here seems to refer to both amorous and religious faith, and to depend upon the fact that both Sidi-el-Kirim and Jeanne are Europeans who

73 Jennifer Waelti-Walters, "Les lesbiennes et le roman français 1796–1996," *Nouvelles Questions Féministes* 18:1 (1997): 45–56.

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have converted to Islam. Jeanne puts the two in the same breath: "nell'anima, mi sono fatta mussulmana. Così che Abdallah ed io, siamo sposi davanti ad Allah, o a Dio, che è poi lo stesso" (*L'oasi*, 75) [in my soul, I have become Muslim. So Abdallah and I are married before Allah, or God, which is the same]. Both Europeans are also "served" by their spouses; Abdallah is literally Jeanne's servant, and Sidi-el-Kirim instructs Henry in appropriate matrimonial relations of power by way of a description of his wife: "E' una brava e buona donna, che mi ama, mi serve, mi obbedisce come devono fare le buone spose, almeno le spose non guastate dalla così detta empancipazione, in uso in Europa e in America" (*L'oasi*, 184) [She is a good woman who loves me, serves me, obeys me as good wives must, at least wives not spoiled by the so-called emancipation practiced in Europe and America]. The return to an anti-emancipationist stance recalls Rafanelli's similar language in *Donne e femmine*, and a demand for ideological coherence would suggest that Jeanne, too, ought to be subservient in relation to her man. Yet it would seem, instead, that Rafanelli herself has stumbled into the usual colonialist trope in which race trumps gender: that is to say, in which a racial hierarchy is what allows the gender hierarchy to be reversed, at least in the relation of white women to the men of colonized countries. Jeanne's masculinization figures her not only as "beyond sexuality" but as an independent agent to whom the indigenous man is subordinate and, given the gender attached to subservience, feminized.

As if to resolve this contradiction, Henry is made to return to Europe and Abdallah to die, and a new family unit is formed at the very end of the novel. Henry's inevitable betrayal of Gamra comes in the particularly noxious form of an abortion inflicted upon her without either her knowledge or consent, and by exploiting her inclination to obey, in much the same way that Gaslini's protagonist had exploited Nica's: "occorre che tu mi obbedisca, in tutto" (*L'oasi*, 249), [you must obey me in everything], says Henry. Deprived of maternity by the infidel, Gamra quickly loses her beauty as well. At the same time, news of the breakout of the Great War reaches even the Oasis, and Jeanne writes unsparingly to Henry: "E dunque, la decrepita Europa, che da secoli affila le sue armi contro tutti i popoli da sfruttare, prova alfine la bontà del metodo in casa propria?" (*L'oasi*, 270) [And so, decrepit Europe, which for centuries had honed its weapons against all other peoples to be exploited, finally experiences the goodness of its own method in its own home]. Needless to say, Henry departs, writing in reply to Jeanne: "Altro che scrivere romanzi d'amore coloniale! La realtà mi travolgerà, fatalmente, come ha già travolto migliaia di giovani di ogni nazionalità, per una ragione che i più non comprenderanno" (*L'oasi*, 273) [So much for writing colonial

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romance novels! Reality will sweep me away, fatally, as it has swept away thousands of young men of all nationalities, for a reason that the majority will not understand]. But, in a final twist at the end of the novel, maternity is restored to Gamra in the form of an orphaned black boy, and a female couple, Jeanne and Gamra, become both sisters and the child's adoptive mother and "grandmother": "esse erano sorelle: donna di Occidente e donna d'Oriente, – una vecchia e l'altra giovane – una ricca di tutta la cultura della scienza e delle arti, l'altra che non sapeva nemmeno leggere, – erano sorelle … . la 'signora' era divenuta per Gamra la 'madre'" (*L'oasi*, 287) [they were sisters, woman of the West and woman of the Orient – one old and the other young, one rich in the sciences and the arts, the other who could barely read – they were sisters … the "lady" had become for Gamra her "mother"]. In this final adoption of the "morettino" [little black child, literally "little Moor"] as Gamra's child, and his naming as "Henry," Rafanelli creates a queer kinship unit that seeks to resolve the trumping of race by gender by replacing gender and racial hierarchies with generational ones. The new "Henry" – now at once the reminder of the indelibly racist colonialist through his name at the same time as he is converted into a black Muslim child – is subordinated by generation to the two women, who themselves stand in a generational relation that suggests a recoding of the relation of Occident and Orient. To be sure, Rafanelli's attempted utopian recoding is not without limitations. On the one hand, "civilization" remains firmly on the side of the Occident, and ignorance on the side of the Orient, and the recoding is further hampered by the adoption of language contemporary to her; the use of the term "morettino" to refer to the black child is itself tainted by association with Italian colonial rhetoric, as illustrated by the widespread use of the stereotypical "morettino" in advertisements during the *ventennio nero*.[74] And yet, on the other hand, the new queer kinship unit that Rafanelli imagines points to possibilities for reconfigurations of relations of gender, race, and generation that would have been unthinkable for any of the figures we have examined thus far. I bring my reparative reading to a close, then, by highlighting the utopian impulse that drives Rafanelli's literary and sartorial production, repeatedly attempting to find ways to cross firmly entrenched divides, whether they be between east and west, Christian and Muslim, black and white, or human and non-human.

74 See Karen Pinkus, *Bodily Regimes: Italian Advertising under Fascism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 66–73.

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EPILOGUE

Divorce Islamic Style: Passing and Posing as Muslim and Tunisian in Postcolonial Italy

Two centuries after the cases we examined in Chapter 3, the Italian–Algerian writer Amara Lakhous reprises the topoi of passing and posing as Muslim in his 2010 novel *Divorzio all'islamica a Viale Marconi* [*Divorce Islamic Style*]. No longer primarily the point of departure for emigrating Italians, but rather the destination for immigrants – many of them Muslims from north Africa – contemporary Italy is now the locus of multiple migrations. *Divorce Islamic Style* explores the imbrication of these migrations with Orientalisms, both internal and external, and thus offers itself both as an epilogue to our examination of accidental orientalists and as a source of yet more reversals. No longer a stage external to Europe, the "Orient" in *Divorce* has been internalized as the multicultural call center in "Little Cairo," locus of the novel's action and site where the protagonist Christian takes on his new identity as the Muslim Tunisian "Issa."[1] "Christian" in both religion and proper name, the protagonist is a Sicilian who studied classical Arabic at the University of Palermo and who, in 2005, is recruited by SISMI (Servizio per

1 Lakhous's play with the identities of religious figures is quite explicit. The name "Issa" is said to be "il corrispettivo di Gesù per i mussulmani" [the equivalent of Jesus for Muslims] and the official of SISMI who hires him consequently adopts the nickname "Giuda" [Judas]: "Tu farai il buono e io sarei il cattivo, non è così? D'ora in poi chiamami Giuda!" (32) [You'll be the good guy and I'll be the bad guy, right? From now on call me Judas]. On the importance of naming in Lakhous's *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a Piazza Vittorio* in particular, as well as in postcolonial literary practice more generally, see Roberto De Robertis, "Storie fuori luogo. Migrazioni, traduzioni e riscritture in *Scontro di Civiltà per un ascensore a Piazza Vittorio* di Amara Lakhous," *Studi d'italianistica nell'Africa australe / Italian Studies in South Africa* 21:1 (2008), 215–41.

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le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare) as part of Bush's "War on Terror." His assignment: to impersonate a Muslim Tunisian immigrant and infiltrate a purported terrorist cell in the Roman neighborhood known as "Little Cairo," home to an immigrant community made up largely of Egyptians and other north Africans. Both setting and characters contribute to a layering of migrations: Christian's true family origins link him to southern Italian emigration to Tunisia, and the topic of his *tesi di laurea* – Garibaldi's sojourn in Tunisia – in turn links that emigration to the Risorgimento and its making of Italian identity. The embedding of "Cairo" within an Italian city recalls yet other Mediterranean exchanges, both historically and geographically; the name "Cairo" itself is in fact the Italianization, on the part of travelers in the Middle Ages, of the original Arabic name of the city, al-Qāhira, and, as noted in Chapter 1 of this book, Cairo and Alexandria were home to immigrant communities of Europeans in general, and Italians in particular, in the wake of the Napoleonic occupation (1798–1801). There are resonances closer to our own moment as well. That a southern Italian should impersonate a north African immigrant plays upon and inverts recent cinematic practice that maps the itinerary of African immigrants in Italy onto the internal migration of southerners to the north and the external emigration of southerners to the Americas. Think, for example, of Michele Placido's 1990 film *Pummarò*, or Gianni Amelio's 1994 *L'america*, in which the historical emigrations of southerners provide the interpretive key for the contemporary immigration of Africans and Albanians respectively.[2] In this final chapter, I want to examine these multiple and historically varied tales of migration through the lens of the topos of posing as Muslim in order to enter a sacred space, one that links nineteenth-century European migrations to Egypt and the Hijaz with *Divorce Islamic Style*'s representation of the Italian infiltration of "Little Cairo." Lakhous's character himself invokes the analogy: "Un immigrante musulmano che si fa chiamare Cristiano è una pura provocazione. Sarebbe come andare in giro per la Mecca con una croce al collo! Si chiama apostasia, la pena prevista è la condanna a morte" [A Muslim immigrant who is called Christian is pure provocation. It would be like going to Mecca with a cross around your neck. It's called apostasy, and the punishment is a death sentence].[3] The theme and possibility of

2 I am grateful to Marco Purpura and Avy Valladares for calling my attention to the layering of migrations in these two films.

3 Amara Lakhous, *Divorzio all'islamica a viale Marconi* (Rome: Edizioni e/o, 2010), 98. I have consulted Ann Goldstein's translation, *Divorce Islamic Style* (New York: Europa

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conversion to Islam plays a starring role in both of these two scenarios, as we have seen, and links the early twenty-first century to the nineteenth in an embrace that conjures with Islamophobia, the historical malleability of a weak national identity in the Mediterranean, and the *frisson* of entry into a forbidden space in a disguise that is in equal measure linguistic and semiotic.

Lakhous reprises Orientalism's practice of representation by updating and recycling the trope of the Orient as a "theatrical stage affixed to Europe."[4] We have seen the pervasiveness of this metaphor in Nizzoli's picturesque tableaux, in the theatricality of Burton's posing, and in Rafanelli's posing for the camera. Lakhous slyly updates this topos with its titular wink at Pietro Germi's 1961 film *Divorce Italian Style*, and already on the second page of the novel Christian-posing-as-Issa underscores the theatricality of his mission: "non ho nessuna intenzione di giocare a fare il James Bond o il Donnie Brasco, mi manca il *physique du role*" (12) [I have no intention of playing James Bond or Donnie Brasco –I don't have the physique for it (14)]. My interest here, however, is not primarily in this particular filmic reference, but rather in the way that both the metaphor and the medium are updated in Lakhous's novel, as the scripted, cinematic nature of the analogy is underlined from the get-go. As we have seen, in its nineteenth-century version, and in particular in the case of Richard F. Burton, such passing was the sign of the extraordinary man, alone at Mecca among a sea of authentic and supposedly "transparent" believers.[5] Lakhous, instead, takes up the topos in order to generalize it as the condition of postcolonial Italian identities, whether "migrant" or "italiano *doc*," as the novel calls them: "un italiano al cento percento, un italianissimo" (23) [a hundred percent Italian, thoroughly Italian (25)].

In this reversal of the centrifugal movement of colonization, Little Cairo serves as new contact zone and synecdoche for postcolonial Italy in much the same way as did the apartment building in Rome's Piazza Vittorio in Lakhous's previous novel, *Scontro di Civiltà per un ascensore in Piazza Vittorio* [*Clash of Civilizations over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio*].[6] The predominantly male zone of Little Cairo is supplemented by the circle of friends of "Sofia,"

Editions, 2012). In this case, her translation omits the final sentence of the passage quoted, which appears in my own translation.

4 Said, *Orientalism*, 63.

5 On the supposed "transparency" of local populations, see Roy, *Indian Traffic*.

6 On spatial representation in *Scontro di Civiltà*, see Fulvio Pezzarossa, "Una casa tutta per sé: Generazioni migranti e spazi abitativi," in *Certi confini: Sulla letteratura italiana delll'immigrazione*, ed. Lucia Quaquarelli (Milan: Morellini, 2010), 59–117.

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the Egyptian woman whose first-person narrative alternates with that of Issa, and the name of whose daughter, "Aida" evokes the nineteenth-century Italian presence in Egypt we have been discussing in Chapters 1 and 3 of this book.[7] Through this combination, Egyptians, Tunisians, Moroccans, Albanians, Senegalese, Algerians, Bangladeshi, and Italians *doc* are brought together, and passing and posing become not the exception but the norm.

Linda Williams's argument, which we had occasion to discuss in Chapter 3, can again be helpful in conceptualizing the impersonation of a Tunisian Muslim on the part of a Catholic Sicilian in *Divorce Islamic Style* insofar as it gives us a model that takes into consideration both the tendency of a simple binary to impose itself (in the case discussed by Williams, black and white) and the mediation of other terms (in that case, Jewishness and Irishness). In our example, the terms are obviously different: a binary between Christian and Muslim carries the insistent and politically charged force of that between black and white, while Italianness, southernness, and the ethnicities and nationalities of the immigrant community in "Little Cairo" mediate and complicate the scenario. A Sicilian Italian who poses as a Tunisian Muslim generates multiple implications on both diegetic and extradiegetic levels. By insisting upon the performative aspect, especially in the earlier portion of the novel, Christian's posing seems to underline his distance from the stigmatized identity of Issa, the Muslim immigrant; at the same time, his pose reminds us that he is an "Italian" Christian: that is to say, it allows Christian-the-Sicilian to pass as Italian, and therefore to distance himself from his own stigmatized identity as a southerner. Christian/Issa's linguistic disguise is particularly important in this scenario, and recalls the training in languages so important to the professional Orientalist and so crucial to the male masquerade in Mecca. Christian, after all, is chosen for the assignment because of his fluency in Arabic and his training as an "arabista:" "all'Università di Palermo mi misi a studiare l'arabo classico … . Ero uno dei migliori e molti non credevano che fossi di madrelingua italiana" (17) [at the university I began studying classical Arabic … . I was one of the best students and a lot of people couldn't believe that my native language was Italian (19)].

But the role requires yet another linguistic disguise: "Mi accorgo di un problema che avevo completamente sottovalutato: per sembrare credibile devo parlare un italiano stentato, e pure un po" sgrammaticato" (45) [I became aware of a problem I had completely underestimated: to seem

7 Remember that Verdi's *Aida* had its debut in Cairo in 1871.

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credible I have to speak a labored Italian, even a little ungrammatical (47)]. This "labored Italian" should not only mimic the broken Italian of recent immigrants but bear the traces of his fictional persona as an immigrant who had lived in Sicily, and thus of his "true" persona as Sicilian Italian: "L'ideale e' parlare un italiano con una doppia cadenza: araba, perché sono tunisino, e siciliano perché sono un immigrato che ha vissuto in Sicilia" (45) [The ideal is to speak an Italian with a dual cadence: Arab because I'm Tunisian, and Sicilian, because I'm an immigrant who has lived in Sicily (47)]. This double cadence is not produced through mimicking the speech of actual immigrants but rather comes into being as a fictional construct through the violation of grammatical norms: "Decido senza esitazione di sospendere momentaneamente molte regole grammaticali, quindi via il congiuntivo e il passato remoto" (45) [I promptly decide to temporarily suspend a lot of grammatical rules, so no more subjunctive or remote past (47)]. And the Sicilian in him adds: "Mi scassa la minchia rinunciare al nostro adorato passato remoto" (45) [It annoys me to give up our adored *passato remoto* (47)], where the adored preterite refers us specifically to the Sicilian preference for that tense. His narrator's linguistic predicament mimics Lakhous's own: as he proclaims on his personal website, "I Arabise the Italian and Italianise the Arabic. Io arabizzo l'italiano e italianizzo l'arabo."[8] Writing in both languages (his first book, *Le cimici e il pirata*, was published in a bilingual edition), Lakhous, too, speaks with a "double cadence."

This double cadence can be heard on the extradiegetic level as well, where we can point to yet other ramifications. Christian's posing within the diegetic world of *Divorce Islamic Style* is in fact an inversion of the posing and passing discussed by Williams, in which the recent immigrant group (Jews) poses as the older stigmatized identity (blacks) and accrues to itself the pathos now conventionally associated with the suffering of slaves. Christian instead is a member of the older stigmatized identity (southern Italians), posing as a member of the more recent immigrant group (north Africans). This identity has implications for the "Orientalist" stance of the fictional character: the norm to which Christian compares the north African subjects he observes is not that of a homogeneous West, as would the stereotypical nineteenth-century Orientalist, but rather that of the experience of southern Italians. For example, when Christian/Issa looks for an apartment in Viale Marconi, a residence which would normalize his status as immigrant, he is introduced

8 See http://www.amaralakhous.com/, accessed March 21, 2010.

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to the ways of the immigrant community, which he compares not to those of "Italy" or the "West" but to those of Sicily:

> Ormai tutti mi chiamano 'Issa il tunisino' o semplicemente 'il tunisino.' A me va bene così. Forse diventerò finalmente un residente di Viale Marconi. Akram piglia un pezzetto di carta e scrive il numero di telefono della proprietaria di casa, una certa Teresa. Ne approfitta per darmi un po' di consigli utili. Prima di tutto, devo chiamare subito la tizia e dirle che la contatto da parte sua. Da siciliano, conosco fin troppo bene il sistema di raccomandazioni. Tutti vogliono garanzie. (44)
>
> [By now they all call me "Issa the Tunisian" or simply the Tunisian. I'm happy with that. Maybe I'll finally become a resident of Viale Marconi. Akram takes a piece of paper and writes the phone number of the landlady, a certain Teresa. He takes the opportunity to give me some useful advice. First of all I should call the lady immediately and tell her that I'm getting in touch with her on his recommendation. As a Sicilian, I know all too well the system of recommendations. Everyone wants guarantees (46)]

What is more, when we step out of the diegetic world to include the writer himself, we find that the scenario Williams proposes does in fact apply to Amara Lakhous as author: the recent Muslim/Algerian/Italian writer "poses," through his narrating character Christian, as the older stigmatized identity, southerner. As a result, not only do the familiar narratives of southern Italian suffering and migration attach a domesticating pathos to the stories of the new immigrants to Italy, but, just as the Jew posing as black passed for white, Lakhous the immigrant writer posing as a Sicilian (himself posing as a new immigrant) "passes" as an Italian writer. Lakhous is able to manipulate both dialect and standard Italian, and tracks the migration of dialects along the routes of the mobility of identities. When his apartment-mate, the Senegalese Ibrahim, explains that "il razzismo esiste fra gli italiani stessi. A Milano si dice: uè, terùn" [There's racism among the Italians themselves. In Milan they say "Hey, southerner]," Christian/Issa comments: "Ieri uè terùn, oggi uè extracomunitario, marocchino, negro! Che dobbiamo fare? Mi viene un po' da ridere quando sento il senegalese parlare in milanese" (134) [Yesterday, "Hey, southerner," today, "hey, non-European, Moroccan, black." What should we do? It sort of makes me laugh to hear the Senegalese speaking the Milanese dialect (134)]. The comic effect of the immigrant who speaks in dialect may refer to Lakhous's own literary and linguistic practice as well; in both his novels

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he weaves standard Italian and dialect together in a way that has occasioned comparisons with Gadda's "plurilinguismo," first and foremost by the author himself.[9] Author and narrator thus share the stance of an ethnographic observer, intent on translating Muslim practices for an Italian readership, addressed as Christian (in faith, if not in name) and in need of enlightenment.[10] "Continuo a pensare con la mia testa italiana, non riesco a mettermi nei panni degli immigrati extracomunitari" (49) [I'm still thinking with my Italian brain, I can't put myself in the clothes of the non-European immigrant (51; translation modified)], falsely laments Christian/Issa, describing precisely the goal on the part of Lakhous: to pose as an "Italian brain" in the "panni degli immigrati." The nineteenth-century Orientalist practice of adopting native dress is here updated as a figure for cross-cultural understanding, the "panni" now both literal and figurative. A double-voiced critique is made possible through a "we" whose reference alternates between that of the "*DOC* Italians" and that of the "immigrants." So, for example, at one point Issa notes that "I musulmani sono dei veri maschilisti, dichiaratamente omofobi. Mentre noi italiani, i soliti furbi, facciamo gli amici dei gay e delle donne, ma sotto sotto siamo ipocritamente maschilisti" (64) [Muslims are real male chauvinists, openly homophobic. While we Italians, sly as usual, are friendly toward gays and women but underneath we're – hypocritically – chauvinist (65)], but, only a few pages later, the *we* refers explicitly to the group of immigrants who share an apartment: "viviamo in una sorta di enclave egiziana in territorio italiano" (68) [We live in a sort of Egyptian enclave in Italian territory (69)]. The double voice gives equal opportunity to stereotypes about both groups: "Non bado molto allo stereotipo del tunisino spacciatore," says Issa. "Ormai sono vaccinato da tempo contro questi pregiudizi del cazzo: il siciliano mafioso, il

9 In a 2005 interview, Lakhous compares his use of dialect to that of Gadda: "Cerco di usare il napoletano, il milanese a seconda del linguaggio che usano i diversi personaggi. Questa è una grandissima avventura che da solo non posso affrontare, quindi ho bisogno di una figura come quella che Emilio Gadda ha usato per *il Pasticciaccio*, romanzo per il quale ha avuto bisogno della consulenza di un romano." [I try to use Neapolitan and Milanese according to the languages that various characters use. This is a great adventure that I cannot undertake alone, so I need a figure like the one Emilio Gadda used for *That Awful Mess On Via Merulana,* a novel for which he needed the advice of a Roman]. Ubax Christina Ali Farah, "Intervista ad Amara Lakhous," *El-Ghibli rivista online di letteratura della migrazione* 1:7 (2005): accessed May 27, 2017, http://archivio.el-ghibli.org/index.php%3Fid=1&issue=01_07&section=6&index_pos=1&lettura=1.html.

10 Here, too, there is an autobiographical link, since Lakhous himself earned a degree in cultural anthropology at *La sapienza* in Rome.

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napoletano camorrista, il sardo rapitore, l'albanese delinquente, il rom ladro, il musulmano terrorista" (97) [I don't pay much attention to the stereotype of the Tunisian drug dealer. I was inoculated long ago to these shitty prejudices: the Sicilian Mafioso, the Neapolitan Camorrist, the Sardinian kidnapper, the Albanian criminal, the Gypsy thief, the Muslim terrorist (97)].

This authorial stance is present in both the chapters labeled "Issa" and those titled "Sofia": both touch upon the topoi we would expect in an account of "manners and customs of modern Muslims" – the veil, circumcision both male and female, the ease of divorce in Muslim countries, polygamy, the denial of entrance to paradise to Muslim women, all are duly evoked and explained.[11] The alternation between chapters named "Issa" and those named "Sofia" introduces gendered spheres of public and private spaces into the novel, and both Issa and Sofia evoke mediatic forms for the roles they play: *telenovelas* are a dominant reference in the female-gendered space of Sofia's narrative, while both share references to the *commedia all'italiana* and to the pilgrimage to Mecca, in Sofia's case *al femminile*. Born in Cairo, Sofia migrates to Italy as a desirable consequence of her marriage: "In fondo non ero felice del matrimonio in sé, ma dell'idea di venire a vivere in Italia: la Mecca della moda" (38) [Basically I wasn't happy about the idea of the marriage itself, but I liked the idea of going to live in Italy: the Mecca of fashion (40)]. In this Mecca of fashion Sofia becomes a clandestine hairdresser, forced to wear the veil by her observant husband and hide the profession she practices on the side. It is within Sofia's private sphere that the titular question of divorce is first introduced. The facility of divorce in Muslim countries was already a topos in nineteenth-century accounts such as those of Finati: So, for example, Finati's marriage to a slave-girl, who was not only "young and pretty," but, "as it happened, did not come empty handed" (*Narrative*, I, 116), was short-lived and easily dissolved through divorce, prompting Finati-Mahomet to remark: "Thus easily is this matter disposed of among Mahometans, so soon as the parties become indifferent to one another; and it seems to be perhaps the only mode of preventing those lamentable disorders which abound in countries where matrimony once contracted becomes indissoluble" (*Narrative*, I, 192) Lakhous rescripts this scenario in relation to the Pietro Germi film evoked by the title, *Divorzio all'italiana*, and updates it by transferring it to the female sphere. The situation in *Divorce Italian Style* is of course precisely that of a country in which marriage is indissoluble; the plot turns upon the

11 I play upon the title of the classic Orientalist study, Edward W. Lane's 1836 *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*.

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impossibility of divorce in Italy in 1961, and the machinations necessary for a Sicilian to rid himself of an unwanted wife. In both the male travelogues of the nineteenth century and the Italian film, however, divorce is understood to serve the interests of male desire. *Divorce Islamic Style* brings these two strands together, but with a twist: divorce is easily obtained, as it is in Islamic law, but the closing section of the novel turns upon Sofia's desire to rid herself of an unwanted husband and marry Christian/Issa, whom she fantasizes as "il Marcello arabo" [the Arab Marcello].

There would be much to say about the role of the *commedia all'italiana* in Lakhous's works, but, for our present purposes, two things stand out: the role that posing plays already in relation to southern Italian identity in the Germi film, and the mise en abyme that is produced in the novel by the introduction of updated mediatic references.[12] The protagonist of *Divorce Italian Style* is a Sicilian Baron, Ferdinando Cefalù, aka Fefè, played by Marcello Mastroianni, that same Marcello whom Sofia evokes in her fantasy about Issa/Christian as "il Marcello arabo."[13] In *Divorzio all'italiana* Mastroianni poses: his performance of southernness includes an exaggerated facial tic, greasily pomaded hair, and a use of the *passato remoto* that stands out from his otherwise standard spoken Italian; it is clear that we are to observe the artifice of his performance, to delight in the distance between the star whom we know to be Mastroianni and the stigmatized southerner intent on exploiting article 587 of the Italian Penal Code (abolished only in 1981).[14] Here, too, stereotypes circulate: Fefè's wife's upper lip is darkened by

12 Lakhous also employs cinematic references to add to the layering of migrations his novel evokes; for example, Issa cites Francesco Rosi's 1959 film *I magliari*, which recounts the adventures of a group of Italian swindlers in Germany as an example of "dei vu cumprà italiani" (73).

13 Sofia first places her "Marcello arabo" fantasy in the Trevi fountain scene of *La Dolce Vita*, not coincidentally a film that plays a crucial role in *Divorzio all'italiana* as well. Fefè plots (unsuccessfully) to discover his wife and lover *in flagrante* while the rest of the town attends the debut screening of Fellini's film. Sofia later adds to her "Marcello arabo" fantasy Mastroianni's roles in *Il Bell'Antonio* and *Una giornata particolare*.

14 Article 587 reads: "Chiunque cagiona la morte del coniuge, della figlia o della sorella, nell'atto in cui ne scopre la illegittima relazione carnale e nello stato d'ira determinato dall'offesa recata all'onor suo o della famiglia, è punito con la reclusione da tre a sette anni." [Whosoever causes the death of a spouse, a daughter, or a sister in the act in which he discovers an illegitimate carnal relation, and in the state of anger caused by the offense to his honor or that of his family, is punished with imprisonment from three to seven years]. See "Art. 587 codice penale Rocco," accessed May 26, 2017: https://www.liberliber.it/mediateca/libri/g/grande/l_onore/html/art_587.htm.

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more than a hint of a mustache, women are jealously guarded, and the code of honor reigns in the place of law in a sun-drenched, backward Sicily. The evocation of *Divorce Italian Style* thus participates in the generalization of stereotypes that includes migrants and "italiani *doc*" equally, and underlines the practice of posing as characteristic of "identity Italian style" per se.

Divorzio all'islamica a Viale Marconi follows the Orientalist script to the threshold of the local mosque, when Christian/Issa's supervisor, Captain Judas, announces that "bisogna infiltrarsi nella Moschea della Pace" [you'll have to infiltrate the Mosque of Peace] in order to reveal the head of the terrorist cell, which Judas claims is none other than Sofia's husband, Felice. "Questa è una vera occasione," says Christian/Issa, "Potrebbe essere un'esperienza unica che arricchirebbe il mio curriculum di orientalista, o meglio di arabista, come si usa dire in ambito academico" (140) [this is a real opportunity – a unique experience that could enrich my résumé as an Orientalist, or, rather, as an Arabist, as they say in the academic world (140)]. The expected topoi of conversion to Islam and fear of its attendant circumcision are invoked *in via negativa*: "Non ti sto chiedendo di convertirti all'Islam," exclaims Judas, who then adds: "Mi raccomando, quando vai a fare le abluzioni non mostrare il tuo pisellino. Ricordati che non sei circonciso" (140) [I'm not asking you to convert to Islam … . I would advise you, when you perform your ablutions, not to show your dick. Remember you're not circumcised (139)]. Farther than this joking invocation of conversion, however, the novel does not go; Christian does not cross the threshold and enter the mosque, renounce his faith, or submit to circumcision. Soon thereafter we see Christian/Issa take off "i vestiti dell'extracomunitario" (162) [immigrant clothes (161)], and, with them, his Orientalist pose: "Insomma, la fissazione di dimostrare di conoscere l'altro molto bene, anzi di doverlo sempre stupire. Ecco in che cosa consiste il lavoro dell'arabista! Un mestiere del cazzo, appunto!" (163) [In other words, the obsession to prove that I know the other well, rather, to have always to astonish him. That's what the work of the Arabist consists of. An occupation for dickheads, precisely! (162), translation modified]. The Orientalist script is abandoned, and the boundary between Christian and Muslim is not crossed in the diegetic world of the novel.

Indeed, the novel could well have ended here; Christian has taken off the "panni degli immigrati" and with them jettisons his role as ethnographic "spy." But two chapters remain, and in them are not only the plot lines regarding Sofia tied up, but a double mise en abyme is introduced. The first is announced by Sofia soon after her husband repudiates her for the third and fateful time, thereby rendering divorce definitive. The repentant husband

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pleads tearfully for forgiveness in a scene that strikes Sofia as a déjà vu: "Sembra una scena tratta da una telenovela noiosissima. Il titolo potrebbe essere *Divorzio all'islamica 3*" (168) [It's like a scene from a very boring soap opera. The title could be *Divorce Italian Style 3* (167)]; a "puntata" or so later, Sofia extends the title of her soap opera: "Ormai *Divorzio all'islamica a viale Marconi* ha superato tutte le telenovelas egiziane, messicane, brasiliane e turche messe insieme" (173) [Now *Divorce Italian Style* has surpassed all the Egyptian, Mexican, Brazilian, and Turkish soap operas put together (171)]. This is not a classic mise en abyme, in which a miniature version of the work appears within the work itself – *Hamlet*'s play within the play – with the effect that the embedded work (the play within the play) makes the embedding work (Hamlet) seem to be less fictional, but rather something like its reversal.[15] Sofia's *Divorce Italian Style* recodes the novel in which it appears, making it now appear to be metafictional: Lakhous's *Divorce Italian Style* contains Sofia's *Divorce Italian Style*; the literary text embeds a televised soap opera. Such a recoding crosses previously established boundaries between fictional modes and is given its final fillip by the revelation by Judas that the entire "Operation Little Cairo" was nothing more than a trumped-up test: "'Quindi l'operazione "Little Cairo" è stata tutta una messa in scena?'," ["So Operation Little Cairo was all staged?" (183)], asks Christian/Issa. "'Messa in scene nooo … L'hai appena letto; niente altro che un test, un training.' 'Una sorta di *Scherzi a parte*, un *Truman Show* all'italiana!'" (185) ["Staged? Nooo. You read it: it was a test, a training exercise." "A sort of *Candid Camera*, a *Truman Show* Italian style!" (183–84)]. The more interesting reference for our purposes is the second of the two, to the American film *The Truman Show*, in which the character of the film discovers that he has been the subject of a reality TV show since his birth; as Emma Kafalenos has observed, the film embeds the television show in such a way as to render the borders between the two often indistinguishable.[16] In Lakhous's *Divorce Islamic Style* the revelation that the migrant reality in which Christian/Issa posed and passed was itself one big pose erodes the ground upon which any reliable distinction might be made between authentic identities and those assumed as part of a "messa

15 The semiotician Yuri Lotman suggests that the play within the play "encourages the perception of the remaining space of the text as real" in "The Text Within the Text," trans. Jerry Leo and Amy Mandelker, *PMLA* 109:3 (1994): 377–84.

16 See Emma Kalafenos, "The Power of Double Coding to Represent New Forms of Representation: *The Truman Show*, *Dorian Gray*, "Blow-Up," and Whistler's *Caprice in Purple and Gold*," in *Poetics Today* 24:1 (2003): 1–33.

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in scena." This sudden shift of ground finds expression in an equally sudden linguistic shift on the part of Christian/Issa, who adopts an accent ("figlio di buttana," [son of a brostitute] Christian/Issa spits at Giuda) that is as likely to be Egyptian as Sicilian, and that we recognize as that of his apartment-mate Saber, who "potrebbe passare per un italiano doc" [could pass like a purebred Italian] were it not for the fact that "non riesce a pronunciare la lettera p, e per sopravvivere linguisticamente si aggrappa come un naufrago disperato alla b. Quando dice la parola 'buttana' viene scambiato per un siciliano, per il resto é un bel bordello" (70) [he can't pronounce the letter "p," and to survive linguistically he clings, like a desperate shipwrecked sailor, to the "b." When he says the word "brostitute" people think he's Sicilian, otherwise it's kind of a mess (71)]. Saber's name itself conjures up "Sabir," as Lingua Franca of the early modern Mediterranean was also called: derived primarily from Italian and Provençal, the pidgin came to be called "Sabir," probably from a phrase such as "Sabir parlar? Do you know how to speak (Lingua Franca)?"[17] The identities of the Sicilian–Tunisian–Italian and now Egyptian Christian/Issa are thus not untangled in the final moment; instead, Christian/Issa becomes the site of the proliferation and crossing of languages and identities that is generalized as an Italian future in which it is no longer possible to say who is a migrant and who is not.

We end, then, with a final set of reversals of several of the Orientalizing strategies we have examined in this book. If Amalia Nizzoli's travels served to offer up reversibilities in which her Orientalizing gaze was turned back upon her to "Europeanize" and "Italianize" her in Muhammad Alì's Egypt, Lakhous offers a reversal of that movement; Cairo has now come to contemporary Italy, and the result is the "migrantization" of Italians, both DOC and not. And, if entering the sacred space of Mecca as a European man was an exceptional moment when pretense and disguise formed the horizon of expectations for European participants in the Hajj, now that horizon is imagined as the new norm in "Little Cairo," and, by extension, in postcolonial Italy itself. Like Rafanelli, then, Lakhous's crossing of identities and

17 See John Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2, 607–10. Holm writes that Lingua Franca (with capital letters) probably began with the First Crusade in 1096, and that the first known text, written in Tunisia, dates to 1353. It is to be distinguished from *lingua franca* (uncapitalized), which has come to mean "any vehicular language" used by groups with no other language in common. What is more, Holm reports that a variety of "restructured Italian" that is used in Ethiopia, which is distinct from Lingua Franca, "uses /b/ in place of Italian /p/," adding yet further geographical reach to the history of migrations and colonizations evoked by the novel.

languages is driven by a utopian impulse, one that, in this final reparative moment, I choose to share. I thus take the evocation of the historical "Sabir" as an entreaty to continue to reread the past and present of the transnational migrations of Italians, both DOC and not, as we move toward the future to which Lakhous's novel aspires.

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